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December 13, 1956

Mr. J. O. Prestwich, Librarian
The Queen's College
Oxford

Dear Mr. Prestwich:

Thank you for your letter of November 29 about the manuscript of "Childhood Among the Ferns." I knew that you had the manuscript of "Winter Words," though I have never seen it on my all too brief visits to Oxford. What a pity that Sir Sydney's loyalties were to Cambridge instead of Oxford; otherwise, he might have been persuaded to give you the single poem to add to the rest of the manuscript.

When I acquired the little collection of poems, I was just as eager to obtain "Childhood" as "Lyonnesse," because, although the latter is far more successful as a poem, and is I think one of Hardy's half dozen best lyrics, the former records an incident of great psychological importance and is therefore of particular value to such a personal collection as mine. Incidentally, you might want to make a note that I also acquired from Sir Sydney's sale the draft of the title-page of "Winter Words" and the concluding portion of the Preface, both in Hardy's hand.

Very sincerely yours,

F. B. Adams Jr

F. B. Adams, Jr.

TELEPHONE:
DORCHESTER 43.

MAX GATE,
DORCHESTER.
DORSET.

19 April 1926

Dear Dr Walker:

I have just sent to you a sketch of myself by the late William Strang, on the chance of its finding a nail on some wall in the College. I suddenly felt ashamed at what seemed a great piece of vanity till I thought you would understand that as I had nothing at all valuable to present to a rich & ancient institution like Queen's, it was sent to show in a feeble way my sense of the hospitality mental & corporeal I have experienced there.

Queen's College,
Oxford.

April 22, 1926.

Dear Mr Hardy,

I have just returned to College after a short visit to Cornwall, and your portrait has been delivered, safe and sound.

The formal acceptance of your gift rests with the College, to which I will read your letter at its Meeting on Wednesday next. I think , however, that I may anticipate itss decision, and prepare you for its vote of thanks. I am troubling you with all this explanation of formalities, in order that you may understand that in this present letter I am writing to you merely in my own name and not that of the College.

For my own part, I should like to thank you most sincerely and most heartily for the present of your portrait, which will always be treasured among the most precious possessions of the Society. May I at the same time thank you for the very charming letter in which your gift is announced, and in particular for the kind things that you say about my wife and me! May I ask you to express to Mrs Hardy my wife's, and my own, very kind regards. We were both of us so very glad to have from my colleague Elton so ~~glad~~ good a report of your health.

I hope you & Mrs Walker continue well. We often think of you, & my wife sends kind regards to both.

Believe me

Yours sincerely

Thomas Hardy.

I hope that you will forgive a letter in typescript, and ill typed too. My handwriting is so vile and illegible that I am anxious to spare my correspondents the pains of deciphering it.

Believe me,

Yours very gratefully,

E. M. Walker.

26.2.96

Dear Mr Treece:

I have just returned from London, & will call this afternoon about 4, on the chance of finding you at home.

Yours very truly
T. Hardy

Presented to Queen's College Oxford, by Florence Hardy, in accordance with the wish of her husband Thomas Hardy, expressed during his lifetime.

Summer 1928.

Last leaf presented to the College through Miss Evelyn Hardy & by permission of Miss Cooper Willis (representing Hardy's estate), Saturday, February 5th, 1955

Winter Words

In various Moods & Metres

By

Thomas Hardy.

Introductory Note

So far as I am aware, I ~~am the~~ happen to be the only English poet who has brought out a new volume of his verse on his .... birthday, whatever may have been the case with the ancient Greeks, for it must be remembered that poets did not die young in those days.

This, however, is not the point of the present few preliminary words. My last volume of poems was pronounced wholly gloomy & pessimistic by reviewers – even by some of the more able class. My sense of the oddity of this verdict may be imagined when, in selecting them, I had been, as I thought, rather too liberal in admitting flippant, not to say farcical, pieces into the collection. However, I did not suppose that the licensed tasters had wilfully misrepresented the book, & said nothing, knowing well ~~enough~~ that they ~~had~~ could not have read it.

As labels stick, I foresee readily enough that the same perennial inscription will be set on the following pages, & therefore take no trouble to argue on the ~~point~~ proceeding, notwithstanding ~~to wh~~ the surprises to which I could treat my critics by uncovering a place here & there to them in the volume.

This being probably my last appearance on the literary stage I would say, more seriously, ~~I would say~~ that though, alas, it would be idle to pretend that the publication of these poems ~~has had~~ can have much interest for me, the track having been adventured so many times before to-day, the pieces themselves have been prepared with reasonable care, if not quite with ~~that~~ the zest of a young man new to print.

I also repeat what I have often stated ~~before~~ on such occasions, that no harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages – or in any bygone pages of mine, for that matter.

The new Dawn's Business

What are you doing outside my walls,
O Dawn of another day?
I have not called you over the edge
Of the heathy ledge,
So why do you come this way?
With your ~~creeping~~ furtive-foot~~ed movements~~-step without sound here,
And your face so deedily gray?

"I show a light for killing the man
Who lives not far from you,
And for bringing to birth the lady's child,
Nigh domiciled,
And for earthing a corpse or two;
And for several other such odd jobs round here
That Time to-day must do.

"But you he leaves alone (although,
As you have often said,
You are ~~any day~~ always ready to pay the debt
You don't forget
You owe for board & bed:)
The truth is, ~~that~~ when ~~mortals are willing~~ men willing are found here
He takes those loth instead."

Proud Songsters

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
And the finches whistle in ones & pairs,
And as it gets dark loud nightingales
In bushes
Pipe, as they can when April wears,
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelvemonths' growing,
Which a year ago, or less than twain,
No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But only particles of grain,
And earth, & air, & rain.

Thoughts at Midnight.

Mankind, you dismay me
when shadows waylay me! –
Not by your splendours
Do you affray me,
Not as pretenders
To demonic keenness,
Not by your meanness,
Nor your ill-teachings,
Nor your false preachings,
Nor your banalities
And immoralities,
Nor by your daring
Nor sinister bearing;
But by your madnesses
Capping cool badnesses,
Acting like puppets
Under Time's buffets;
In superstitions
And ambitions
Moved by no wisdom,
Far-sight, or system,
Led by sheer senselessness
And presciencelessness
Into unreason
And hideous self-treason....
God, look he on you,
Have mercy upon you!

Part written 25th May, 1906.

"I am the One"

I am the one whom ringdoves see
Through chinks in boughs
When they do not rouse
In sudden dread,
But stay ~~[illegible]~~ on cooing, as if they said:
"Oh; it's only he."

I am the passer when up-eared hares,
~~Neared~~ Stirred as they eat
The new-sprung wheat,
Their ~~bites~~ munch resume
As if they ~~said~~ thought: "He is one for whom
Nobody cares."

Wet-eyed mourners glance at me
~~I am the person whom mourners see~~
As in train they ~~slowly~~ ~~palely~~ pass
Along the grass
To a ~~mounded~~ hollowed spot,
And think: "No matter; he quizzes not
Our misery."

I hear above: "~~Ye~~ We stars ~~pay~~ must lend
No fierce regard
To his gaze, so hard
Bent on us thus, —
~~And~~ Must scathe him not. He is ~~part of~~ one with us
Beginning & end."

The Prophetess.

1.

"Now shall I sing
That pretty thing
"The Mocking-Bird?"— And sing it straight did she.
I had no cause
To think it was
A Mocking-bird in truth that sang to me.

3.

But after years
Of hopes & fears,
And all ~~Time~~ they brings, & all they ~~it~~ takes away,
I found I had heard
The Mocking-bird
In person singing there to me that day.

2.

Not even the glance
She threw askance
Foretold to me, nor did the time or rhyme,
That the words bore
A meaning more
Than that they were a ditty of the time.

A Wish for Unconsciousness.

If I could but abide
As a tablet on a wall,
Or a hillock daisy-pied,
Or a picture in a hall,
And as nothing else at all,
I should feel no doleful achings,
I should hear no judgment-call,
Have no evil dreams or wakings,
No uncouth or grisly care;
In a word, no cross to bear.

The Bad Example.

Fie, Aphrodite, shamming you are no mother,
And your maternal markings trying to smother,
As you were maiden, now you love another!....
If ~~such as~~ one like you ~~have~~ need ~~to so abuse~~ such pretence to noose him,
Indulgence in too early fires beware you
~~Who yet are~~ All girls yet virgin, & have constant care you
Become not staled by use as she has, ere you
~~Find~~ Meet you ~~best~~ most-loved; lest, ~~you disgust &~~ tumbled, you should lose him.

Partly from Meleager.

To Louisa in the Lane.

Meet me again as at that time
In the hollow of the lane;
I will not pass as in my prime
I passed at ~~[illegible]~~ each day's wane.
—Ah, I remember!
To do it you will have to see
Anew this ~~earthly~~ sorry scene wherein you have ceased to be!

But I will welcome your ~~fair-eyed~~ aspen form
As you gaze wondering round
And say with ~~shivering~~ spectral frail alarm,
"Why am I still here found?
—Ah, I remember!
It is ~~for~~ through him with ~~careless~~ blitheful brow
Who did not love me then, but loves & draws me now!"

And I shall answer: "Sweet of eyes,
~~Take me back~~ Carry me with you, Dear,
To where you donned this spirit-guise;
It's better there than here!"
—Till I remember
Such is a deed you cannot do:
Wait must I, till ~~as Nature's course~~ with flung-off flesh I follow you.

Love watches a Window.

"Here in the window beaming ~~above~~ across
Is he — the lineaments like him so! —
The saint whose name I do not know,
With the holy robe & the cheek aglow.
Here will I kneel as if worshipping God
When all the time I am worshipping you,
Whose Love I was —
You that with me will nevermore tread anew
The paradise-paths we trod!"

She came to that ~~pinewood~~ prominent pew each day,
And sat there. Zealously she came
And watched her Love — looking just the same
From the rubied eastern tracery-frame —
The man who had quite forsaken her
And followed another, it was thought. —
Be't as it may,
[Thinner, more thin, was the lady's figure wrought
By some ~~smart~~ ache, year on year.

Well, now she's dead, & dead is he
From whom her heart once drew delight,
Whose face glowed daily, lover-bright,
High in the glass before her sight.
And still the face ~~glows out~~ is seen as clear
In the rubied eastern window-gleam
As formerly;
But seen not now is a ~~[illegible]~~ passioned woman's dream
Glowing beside it there.

The Love-letters.

(In Memoriam H. R.)

I met him quite by accident
In a bye-path that ~~would~~ he'd frequent.
And, As he ~~came~~ neared the sunset glow
Warmed up the smile of pleasantry
Upon his too thin face, while he
Held a square packet up to me,
Of what, I did not know.

"Well," said he then; "they are my old letters.
~~Whether~~ Perhaps she— rather felt them fetters.....
You see, I am in a slow decline,
And she's broken ~~it~~ off with me. Quite right
~~Of her, no doubt,~~ To send them back, & true foresight;
~~That made her send them back~~ I'd got too fond of her! To-night
I burn them — stuff of mine!"

He ~~smiled again~~ laughed in the sun ~~& went.~~ — an ache in his ~~with quaint way~~ laughter —
And went. I heard of his death soon after.
~~I'd met him quite by accident.~~

An Unkindly May.

~~(1877.)~~

A shepherd stands by a gate in a white smockfrock:
He holds the gate ajar, intently counting his flock.

The sour spring wind is ~~speaking out~~ blurting boisterous-wise,
And bears on it dirty clouds across the skies;
~~White Tower, the trees~~ ~~Trees of~~ Plantation timbers creak ~~forth~~ like rusty cranes,
Tr. And rooks, & pigeons, ~~sodden~~ dishevelled by late rains,
~~Show~~ Are like gaunt vultures, ~~shabby~~ sodden & unkempt,
And song-birds do not end what they attempt:
The buds have tried to open, but quite failing
Have pinched themselves together ~~as of~~ in their quailing.
The sun pours whitely in eye-trying flaps
~~Between~~ Through passing cloud-holes, ~~near like~~ mimicking audible taps.
"Nature, you're not commendable to-day!"
I think. "Better to-morrow!" she seems to say.

That shepherd still stands in that white smock-frock,
Unnoting all things save the counting his flock.

TH

Unkept Good Fridays.

There are many more Good Fridays
Than this, if we but knew
The names, & could relate them,
Of ~~those then fellows~~ men whom rulers slew
For their good will, & date them
As runs the twelvemonth through.

These nameless Christs' Good Fridays,
Whose virtues wrought their end,
~~Knew~~ Bore days of bonds & burning,
With no man to their friend,
Of mockeries, & spurning:
Yet they are all unpenned.

When they had their Good Fridays
Of bloody sweat & strain
Oblivion hides. We quote not
Their dying words of pain,
Their sepulchres we note not,
Unwitting where they have lain.

No annual Good Fridays
Gained they from cross & cord,
From being sawn asunder,
Disfigured & abhorred,
Smitten & trampled under:
Such ~~dates~~ times no hands ~~record~~ have scored.

Let be. Let lack Good Fridays
These Christs of unwrit ~~fames~~ names;
~~Who found the world not~~ The world was not even worthy
~~Of them,~~ To taunt their hopes & aims,
~~Though no more~~ As little of earth, earthy,
~~Than~~ As his ~~& all earth~~ mankind proclaims.

Good Friday. 1927

The Mound.

For a moment pause:—
Just here it was;
And through the ~~bare~~ thin thorn hedge, by the rays of the moon,
I can see the tree ~~within~~ in the field, & beside it the mound—
Now sheeted with snow—whereon we sat that June
When it was green & round,
And she crazed my mind by what she coolly told—
The history of her undoing,
(As I ~~regarded~~ saw it), but she called "comradeship",
That ~~seemed to beget~~ bred in her no rueing:
And Saying she'd not be bound
For life to ~~any~~ one man, ~~rich, poor, or~~ young, ripe-yeared, or old,
~~I was~~ Left me—an innocent simpleton to her viewing;
For, though my accompt of years outscored her own, ~~outtrotted~~.
Hers had more ~~feverishly~~ ~~fervidly~~ hotly flown....
We never met again by this green mound,
~~Never~~ To press as once so often lip on lip,
And palter, & pause:—
Yes; here it was!

Liddell & Scott.

On the Completion of their Lexicon.

(Written after the Death of Liddell in 1898. Scott had died some ten years earlier.)

"Well, though it seems
Beyond our dreams,"
Said Liddell to Scott,
"We've really got
To the very end,
All inked & penned
Blotless & fair
Without turning a hair,
This sultry summer day, A.D.
Eighteen hundred & forty three.

"I've often, I own,
Belched many a moan
At undertaking it,
And dreamt forsaking it.
— Yes, on to Pi,
When the end loomed nigh,
And friends said: 'You've as good as done,'
I almost wished we'd ~~never~~ not begun.
Even now, if people only knew
My sinkings, as we slowly drew
Along through Kappa, Lambda, Mu,
They'd be ~~surprised~~ concerned at my misgiving,
And how I mused on a College living

Right down to Sigma,
But feared a stigma
If I succumbed, ~~to weak conceding,~~ and left old Donnegan
For weary freshmen's eyes to con again:
~~And drew thee back from first believings;~~
And now I often, often wondered
What could have led me to have blundered
So far away from sound Theology
To dialects & etymology;
Words, accents not to be breathed by men
Of any country ever again!"

"My heart most failed,
Indeed, quite quailed,"
Said Scott to Liddell,
"Long ere the middle!...
'Twas one wet dawn
When, slippers on,
And a cold in the head ~~again~~ anew,
Gazing at Delta
I turned & felt a
Wish for bed ~~again~~ anew,
And to let supersedings
Of Passow's readings
In dialects go.
'That German has read
More than we!' I said;
Yea, ~~more than once~~ several times did I feel so!....

"O that first morning, ~~sitting~~ smiling bland,
With sheets of foolscap, quills in hand,
To write ἄαατος and ἀαγής,
Followed by fifteen hundred pages,

What nerve was ours
So to back our powers,
Assured that we should reach ὠώδης
While there was breath left in our bodies!"

Liddell replied: "Well, that's past now:
The job's done, thank God, anyhow."

"And yet it's not,"
Considered Scott,
"For we've to get
~~A printer~~ Subscribers yet
We must remember:
Yes; by September."

O ~~Well~~ Lord; dismiss that. We'll succeed.
Dinner is my immediate need.
I feel as hollow as a fiddle,
Working so many hours," said Liddell.

Christmastide.

The rain-shafts splintered on me
As despondently I strode;
The twilight gloomed upon me
And ~~the~~ bleared, the blank high-road.
Each bush gave forth, when blown on
~~In~~ By gusts ~~with~~ in shower & shower,
A sigh, as it were sown on
In handfuls by a sower.

A cheerful voice called, nigh me,
"A merry Christmas, friend!" —
There rose a figure by me,
Walking with townward trend,
A sodden tramp's, who breaking
Into thin song, ~~trudged~~ bore straight
Ahead, direction taking
Toward the Casuals' gate.

Reluctant Confession.

"What did you do? Cannot you let me know?"
"Don't ask!.... 'Twas midnight, & I'd lost at cards."
"Ah. Was it crime – or seemed it to be so?"
"No – not till afterwards."
"But what, then, did you do?"
"Well – that was the beginning – months ago;
You see, I had lost, & could not pay but – so.
And there ~~came~~ flashed from him strange & strong regards
That you only see when scruples smash to shards;
And thus it happened – ~~&~~ O ~~the night~~ it rained & blew! –
But I can't tell. ~~It~~ 'Twas all so lurid in hue!
And what was worst came after, when I knew
What first crossed not my mind,
And he has never divined!"....
"But he must have, if he proposed it you?"
"I mean, that I got rid of what resulted
In a way a woman told me I consulted:
'Tis that he does not know;
Great God, it harrows me so!
I did not mean to. Every night –
In hell-dark dreams #
I see an appealing figure in white –
That somehow seems
A newborn child in the clothes I set to make,
But left off, for my own depraved name's sake!"

Expectation & Experience.

"I had a holiday once", said the woman —
Her name I did not know —
"And I thought that where I'd like to go,
Of all the places for being jolly,
And getting rid of melancholy,
Would be to a good big fair:
And I went. And it rained in torrents, drenching
Every horse, & sheep, & yeoman,
And my shoulders, face, & hair;
And I found that I was the single woman
In the field — & looked quite odd there!
Everything was spirit-quenching:
I crept & stood in the lew of a wall
To think, & could not tell at all
What on earth made me plod there!"

Aristodemus the Messenian.

(Dramatic Hendecasyllabics)

Scene: Before the Stronghold of Ithome, Messenia. B.C. 72.

His daughter's lover discovered, in the disguise of a soothsayer; to whom enters Aristodemus.

Aristodemus (apostrophically)

Straightway let it be done!

Lover.

Let what be done, chief?

Aristodemus

Who art ~~you~~ thou that art speaking? Some sage prophet? –
She, my daughter's ~~must~~ to perish on the altar!

Lover.

Thou called hero! – a myth thy vaunted power,
If it fail to redeem thy best beloved.

Aristodemus.

Power is nought to the matter. What the Sibyl
Bids, must be!

Lover.

But I doubt such bidding thereto.

Aristodemus.

Nay. White lippings above the Delphic tripod
Mangle never their message! And they lip such:
Thriving, conquering shall M~~a~~essene be forthwith! –
Future worthy my gift of this intact one.
Yea, & who of the ~~house – the famed~~ Aépŷtids renowned house
Weigh can greater with Zeus than she my offspring?
Shall these Spartiats sway to save me reavement?
What is fatherhood when they march in hearing?
Hark! E'en now they are here!

(Marching soldiers heard afar)

Lover (after a silence)

And mean you to warn her?

Aristodemus

Not till evening's ~~curtain~~ shades can cover pallor.

Exit.

Lover stands motionless. Enter the daughter of Aristodemus.

Daughter.

Ah! ~~Y~~ Thou comest to me ~~not~~, Love, ~~now~~ not as earlier!

Lover, as it were waking, approaches, unhoods his face, & embraces her.

Why not speak to me?

Lover.

Sweetest, thou'rt a doomed one!

Daughter.

How?

Lover.

Thy sacrifice by thy father waits thee —
Thee, as offering for the State's salvation.

Daughter.

Not the slaying of me?

Lover

Fail I to stay him —

(She droops in his arms)

Whereto bursts in a flame a means upon me!

Daughter.

How? My father is mighty. Thou'rt so powerless.

Lover

Thus & now it adumbrates. Haste I to him,
Vowing love for thee!

Daughter

which he'll value wryly —
Less than nought, as I know.

Lover

Till comes my sequel;
This, to wit. Thou art got with child by me. Ay.
List: the Sibylline utterance asks a virgin;
So th'rt saved!

Daughter

But a maid's the thing I am, Love!
Gods! With child I am not, but veriest virgin –
who knows surer than thou?

Lover

I'll make him think so,
Though no man upon earth more knows its falseness.
Such ~~doest~~ will I.

Daughter

But alas, thou canst not make him:
Me he knows to the core. He'll not believe thee.

Lover

Then thou canst? He'll accept thy vouching, sure, Sweet,
And another intact one, equal serving,
Straightway find for the knife.

Daughter.

~~O~~ My Love, I must not!

Lover

Not? And yet there is pending for thee, elsewise,
Dark destruction, & all thy burning being
Dungeoned in an eternal nescientness!

She shudders, but weepingly shows unwillingness.

Stay. I'll make the asseverance first. Thou'lt clinch it?

Daughter *(with white cheeks, after a pause)*

Be it so! ....

The Messenian army is heard going out to meet the Spartans.
Lover hoods himself as Aristodemus enters from the stronghold.

Aris

Aristodemus (looking strangely at his daughter)
Stay you yet at the gate? The old man also?
Hath indeed he ~~declared~~ disclosed thee sore ~~tidings~~ pronouncement?

Daughter (falteringly)
~~Tidings? What is their substance? What, sire, spell they?~~
Sore pronouncement? And what is, sire, its' substance?

Messenger enters.

Messenger
King Euphaes is just found slain in combat:
Thereby King is the Chief, Aristodemus,
E'en ere falters the strife — still hard against us!

Aristodemus
Ha! And is it in balance yet! — The deed, then!

Daughter looks at her lover, who throws off his disguise; & they go up to Aristodemus together.

Who's this man? And to what tends all this feigning?

Daughter
He — my lover — who thinks to be my husband —
O my father, thy pardon! Know a secret!

Aristodemus
Lover? Secret? And what? But such is naught now:
Husband he nor another can be to thee,
Let him think as he may! And though I meant not
Death to broach till the eve, let doom be dealt now.
Hark, the Spartan assays! It straight behoves me,
Cost it what to my soul, to give deliverance
To my country the instant. Thou, my daughter,
Foremost maiden of all the maidens round us —

Daughter
O but save me, I pray, sire! And to that end
There has now to be spoke a thing immediate,
And I fain would be speaker. But I cannot!
What he now will reveal, receive as vouched for!

She rushes into the Castle.

Aristodemus (to lover)

What means this in her? Reads she what's impending?

Lover

King, its meaning is much! That she's with child. Yea,
~~Tis~~ By ~~so~~ me! Hence ~~that~~ there ~~needs~~ is called for immolation
One who's what she is not — a sure-sealed virgin —
If you'd haste to deliver stressed Ithome,
Bulking yet overhead as though unweakened!

Aristodemus sinks on to a projection of the rock, & covers his eyes.

Aristodemus (brokenly)

~~Rather~~ Better had she been made the purposed victim
Than that this should have so befallen to save her!
Foul disaster of fatherhood & home-pride! .....
Let this citadel fall; the Spartan army
Trample over its dust, & enter in here!
She is worse than a martyr for the State-weal,
I than one of the slain - And king to-morrow!
(He pauses)
'Tis not true!

He makes as if to fall upon her lover with his sword. Lover defends himself with his dagger. Aristodemus turns to rush into the castle after his daughter.

I misdoubt it! They speak falsely!

Exit Aristodemus.

Lover walks up & down in strained suspense. Interval. A groan is heard. Re-enter Aristodemus sword in hand now bloody - (Lover is about to rush out, but)

Aristodemus

I have proved me her honour, shown the falsehood
Ye twain both have declared me!

Lover

That canst not do!

Aristodemus

I say I have outshown it; proved her even
Until death very virgin pure & spotless!

Enter Attendants.

Attendants (severally)

Horror, horror indeed! He's ripped her up – yea,
With his sword! He Hath split her beauteous body
To prove her maid!

Aristodemus (to lover)

Now diest thou for thy lying, like as she ~~hath~~ died!

He turns his sword on Lover, but falls from ~~agita~~exhaustion. ~~The~~ Lover seizes Aristodemus' sword, & is about to run him through with it; but he checks his hand, & turns the sword upon himself.

Lover dies.

Evening Shadows.

The shadows of my chimneys stretch afar
Across the plot, & on to the privet bower,
And even the shadows of their smok~~e and~~ings show,
And nothing says just now that where they are
They ~~still~~ will in future stretch ~~themselves~~ at this same hour,
Though in my earthen cyst I shall not know.

And at this time the neighbouring Pagan mound,
Whose ~~rites~~ myths the Gospel news now supersede,
Upon the greensward also throws its shade,
And nothing says such shade will spread around
~~As hitherto~~ Even as to-day when men will no more heed
The Gospel ~~scheme~~ news than when the mound was made.

The Three Tall Men

The First Tapping

"What's that tapping at night: tack, tack,
In some house in the street at the back?"

"O, 'tis a man who, when he has leisure,
Is making himself a coffin to measure.
He's so very tall that no carpenter
Will make it long enough, he's in fear.
His father's was shockingly short ~~+~~ for his limb —
And it made a deep impression on him."

The Second Tapping

"That tapping has begun again,
Which ceased a year back, or near then?"

"Yes, 'tis the man you heard before
Making his coffin. The first scarce done
His brother died — his only one —
And, being of his own height, or more,
He ~~gave~~ used it for him; for he was afraid
He'd not get a long enough one quick made.
He's making a second now, to fit
Himself when there shall be need for it.
Carpenters work so by rule of Thumb
That they make mistakes when orders come."

The Third Tapping

"It's strange, but years back, when I was here,
I used to notice a tapping near;

A

Tall 2.

A man was making his coffin at night,
And he made a second, if I am right?
I have heard again the self-same tapping –
Yes, late last night – or was I napping?"

"O no. It's the same man. He made one
Which his brother had; & a second was done –
For himself, as he thought. But lately his son,
As tall as he, died; aye, & as trim,
And his sorrowful father bestowed it on him.
And now the man is making a third,
To be used for himself when he is interred."

"Many years later was brought to me
News that the man had died at sea."

The Lodging-house Fuchsias.

Mrs Masters's fuchsias hung
Higher & broader, & brightly swung,
Bell-like, more & more
Over the narrow garden-path,
Giving the passer a sprinkle-bath
In the morning.

She put up with their pushful ways,
And made us tenderly lift their sprays,
Going to her door:
But when her funeral had to pass
They cut back all the flowery mass
In the morning.

The Whaler's Wife.

I never pass that inn "The Ring of Bells"
Without recalling what its signpost tells
To recollection:
A tale such as all houses yield, maybe,
That ever have known of fealties, phantasy,
Hate, or affection

He has come ~~home~~ from ~~sea~~ a whaling cruise to settle down
As publican in his small native town,
Where his wife dwells.
It is a Sunday morning; she has gone
To church with others. Service still being on
He seeks "The Bells."

"Yes: she's quite thriving; very much so, they say.
~~Heh-heh!~~ I don't believe in tales; 'tis not my way!
I hold them stuff.
But – as you press me – certainly we know
He visits her once at least each week or so,
Fair weather or rough.

"And, after all, he's quite a gentleman,
And lonely wives must friend them where they can.
She'll tell you all,
No doubt, when prayers are done & she comes home.
I'm glad to hear your early taste to roam
Begins to pall."

"I'll stroll out & await her", then said he.
Anon the congregation passed, & she
Passed with the rest,
Unconscious of the great surprise at hand
And bounding on, & smiling – fair & bland –
In her Sunday best.

Straight she was told. She fainted at the news,
But rallied, & was able to refuse
Help to her home.
There she sat waiting all day~~s~~ — with a look —
A look of joy, it seemed, if none mistook ....
But he did not come.

Time flew: her husband kept him absent still,
And by slow slips the woman pined, until,
Grown thin, she died —
Of grief at loss of him, some would aver,
But how could that be? They anyway buried her
By her mother's side.

And by the grave stood, at the funeral,
A tall man, elderly & grave withal;
Gossip grew grim
He was the same one who had been seen before:
He paid, in cash, all owing; & no more
Was heard of him.

At the pulling down of her house, decayed & old,
Many years after, was the true tale told
By an ancient swain.
"The tall man was the father of the wife:
He had beguiled her mother in maiden life,
And to cover her stain

Induced to wive her one in his service bred,
Who brought her ~~child~~ daughter up as his ~~own~~ till wed.
— ~~All this she~~ This the girl knew,
But hid it close, to save her mother's name,
Even from her seaman spouse, & ruined her fame
With him, though true.

Throwing a Tree

New Forest

The two executioners stalk along over the knolls,
Bearing two axes with heavy heads shining & wide,
And a long limp two-handled saw toothed for cutting great boles,
And so they approach the proud tree that bears the death-mark on its side.

Jackets doffed they swing axes & chop away just above ground,
And the chips fly about & lie white on the moss & fallen leaves;
Till a broad deep gash in the bark is hewn all the way round,
And one of them tries to hook upward a rope, which at last he achieves.

The saw then begins, till the top of the tall giant shivers:
The shivers are seen to grow greater each cut than before:
They edge out the saw, tug the rope; but the tree only quivers,
And kneeling & sawing again, they step back to try pulling once more.

Then, lastly, the living mast sways, further sways: with a shout
Job & Ike rush aside. Reached the end of its long staying powers
The tree crashes downward: it shakes ~~the plantation~~ all its ~~old forest~~ neighbours throughout,
And ~~seventy odd~~ two hundred years steady growth has been ended in less than ~~an~~ two hours.

The War-wife of Catknoll.

"What crowd is this in Catknoll Street,
Now I am just come home?
What crowd is this in my old street,
That flings me such a glance?
A stretcher – & corpse? A sobering sight
To greet me, when my heart is light
With thoughts of coming cheer to-night
Now I am back from France."

"O 'tis a woman, soldier-man,
Who seems to be new come:
O 'tis a woman, soldier-man,
Found in the river here,
Whither she went & threw her in,
And now they are carrying her within:
She's drowned herself for a sly sin
Against her husband dear.

"'A said to me, who knew her well,
'O why was I so weak!'
'A said to me, who knew her well,
And have done all her life,
With a downcast face she said to me,
'O why did I keep company
Wi' them that practised gallantry
When vowed a faithful wife!'"

"'O God, I'm driven mad!' she said,
'To hear he's coming back;

'I'm

[illegible] 2

'I'm fairly driven mad!' she said:
'He's been two years agone,
And now he'll find me in this state,
And not forgive me. Had but fate
Kept back his coming three months late,
Nothing of it he'd known!'

"We did not think she meant so much,
And said: 'He may forgive.'
O never we thought she meant so much
As to go doing this!
And now she must ~~[illegible]~~ be crowned!—
~~For after all she was~~ so fair!—
Who ~~And~~ drew men's eyes so everywhere!—
And loveletters beyond compare
For coaxing to a kiss.

"She kept her true a year or more
Against the young men all;
Yes, kept her true a year or more,
And they were most to blame.
There was Will Peach who plays the flute,
And Waywell with the dandy suit,
And Nobb, & Knight.... But she's been mute
As to the father's name."

Note: verse 5.—"She must ~~[illegible]~~ be crowned." Old English for, "there must be a coroner's inquest over her."

Concerning his old Home.

Mood I.

I wish to see it never —
That dismal place
With cracks in its floor —
I would forget it ever!

Mood II.

To see it once, that sad
And memoried place —
Yes, just once more —
I should be faintly glad!

Mood III

To see it often again —
That friendly place
With its green low door —
I'm willing anywhen!

Mood IV

I'll haunt it night & day —
That loveable place,
With its flowers' rich store
That drives regret away!

Her Second Husband hears her Story.

"Still, Dear, it is incredible to me
That here, alone,
You should have sewed him up until he died,
And in this very bed. I do not see
How you could do it, seeing what might betide."

"Well, he came home one midnight, liquored deep –
Worse than I'd known –
And lay down heavily, & soundly slept:
Then, desperate driven, I thought of it, to keep
Him from me when he woke. Being an adept

"With needle & thimble, as he snored, click-click
An~~d~~ hour ~~I wrought~~ I'd sewn,
Till, had he roused, he couldn't have moved from bed,
So tightly laced in sheet & ~~blanket~~, quilt & tick
He lay. And in the morning he was dead.

"Ere people came I drew the stitches out,
And thus 'twas shown
To be a stroke." – "It's a strange tale!" said he.
"And this same bed?" – "Yes, here it came about."
"Well, it ~~sa~~ sounds strange – told here & now ~~tale – this you tell~~ to me.

"Did you intend his death by your tight-lacing?"
"O, that I cannot own.
I could not think of else that would avail
When he should wake ~~[illegible]~~ up, & attempt embracing." –
"Well, it's a cool queer tale!"

[For Mr de la Mare]
published by Faber & Gwyer
as Xmas Card Aug: 27

Yuletide in a Younger World.

We believed in highdays then,
And could glimpse at night
On Christmas Eve
Imminent oncomings of radiant revel –
Doings of delight: –
Now we have no such sight.

We had eyes for phantoms then,
And at bridge or stile
On Christmas Eve
Clear beheld those countless ones who had crossed it
Cross again in file: –
Such has ceased longwhile!

We liked divination then,
And, as they homeward wound
On Christmas Eve,
We could read men's dreams within them spinning
Even as wheels spin round:* –
Now we are ~~vision~~ blinker-bound.

We heard still small voices then,
And, in the dim serene
Of Christmas Eve,
Caught the fartime tones of fire-filled prophets
Long on earth unseen . . . . .
– Can such ever have been?

After the Death of a Friend.

You died, & [illegible] made, but little of it!—
Why then should I, when called to ~~slough~~ doff it,
Drop, & renounce this worm-holed raiment,
Shrink edgewise off from ~~my~~ its grey claimant?
Rather say, when I am Time-outrun,
As you did: Take me, & have done,
Inexorable, insatiate one!

[Sent to Macmillan 23.3.'24
for American period[ica]l]

The Son's Portrait.

I walked the streets of a market town,
And came to a lumber- ~~brokers'~~ shop,
Which I had known ere I met the frown
Of fate & fortune,
And habit led me to stop.

—

In burrowing mid this chattel ~~[illegible]~~ & that,
High, low, or edgew~~ays~~ise thrown,
I lit upon something lying flat —
A fly-flecked ~~blown~~ portrait,
Framed. 'Twas my dead son's own.

—

"That photo?... A ~~A~~ lady — I know not ~~who or~~ whence —
Sold it ~~to~~ me, Ma'am, one day,
With more. You can have it for eighteenpence:
The picture's nothing:
It's but for the frame you pay."

—

He had given it her in their heyday shine,
When she wedded him, long her wooer:
And then he was sent to the front-trench-line,
And fell there fighting:
And she took a new bridegroom to her.

—

I bought the ~~sorry~~ gift she had held so light, ~~of her slight~~,
And buried it — as 'twere he. —
Well, well! Such things are trifling, quite,
But ~~to me~~ when one's lonely
How cruel they can be!

[Pubd in
Saturday Review
23 Nov. 1927]

Lying Awake.

You, Morningtide Star, ~~brood, without a blink~~ now are steady-eyed, over the east,
I know it as if I saw you;
You, Beeches, engrave on the sky your thin twigs, even the least;
Had I paper ~~I'd faithfully~~ & pencil I'd draw you.

You, Meadow, are white with your counterpane cover of dew,
I see it as if I were there;
You, Churchyard, are lightening faint from the shade of the yew,
The names creeping out everywhere.

Sent to Ed. of Saturday (Review) 22 Feb: 1926

The Lady in the Furs.

"I'm a lofty lovely woman,"
Says the lady in the furs,
In the glance she throws around her
On the poorer dames & sirs:
"Thes~~e~~ robe~~s~~, that cost ~~four~~ three figures,
Yes, ~~are~~ is mine," her nod avers.

"True, my money did not buy ~~them~~ it,
But my husband's, from the trade;
And they, they only got ~~them~~ it
From things feeble & afraid
By murdering them in ambush
With a ~~treacherous~~ cunning engine's aid.

"True, my hands, too, did not shape ~~them~~ it
To the pretty ~~drape~~ cut you see,
But the hands of midnight workers
Who are strangers quite to me:
~~They~~ It was fitted, too, by dressers
Ranged around me ~~busily~~ toilsomely.

"But I am a lovely lady,
Though sneerers say I shine
By robbing Nature's children
Of apparel not mine,
And that I am but a ~~prop~~ broom-stick,
Like a scarecrow's wooden spine.

1925.

A Countenance.

I Her laugh was not in the middle of her face quite,
As a gay laugh springs,
It was plain she was anxious about some things
I could not trace quite.
Her curls were like fir-cones – piled up, brown –
Or rather like tight-tied sheaves:
It seemed they could never be taken down.....

And Her lips were too full, some might say:
I did not think so. Anyway,
The shadow her bottom one would cast
Was green in hue whenever she passed
Bright sun~~shine~~ on ~~green~~ midsummer leaves.
Alas, I knew not much of her,
And lost all sight & touch of her!

If otherwise, should I have minded
The ~~sweet~~ shy laugh not in the middle of her mouth quite,
And would my kisses have died of drouth quite
As ~~I slowly grew~~ love became unblinded?

1884.

A Poet's Thought.

It sprang up out of him in the dark,
And took on the lightness of a lark:
It went from his chamber along the city strand,
Lingered awhile, then leapt all over the land.

It came back maimed & mangled. And the poet
When he beheld his offspring did not know it:
Yea, verily; since its birth Time's tongue had tossed to him
Such travesties that his old thought was lost to him.

Silences.

There is the silence of a copse or croft
When the wind sinks dumb,
And of a belfry-loft
When the tenor after tolling stops its hum.

And there's the silence of a lonely pond
Where a man was drowned,
Nor nigh nor yond
A newt, frog, toad, to make the merest sound.

But the rapt silence of an empty house
Where oneself was born,
Dwelt, held carouse
With friends, is of all silences most forlorn!

Past are remembered songs & music-strains
Once audible there:
Roof, rafters, panes
Look absent-~~minded~~thoughted, tranced, or locked in prayer.

It seems no power on earth can waken it
Or rouse its rooms,
Or its past permit
The present to stir a torpor like a tomb's.

"I watched a blackbird"

I watched a blackbird on a budding sycamore
One Easter Day, when sap was stirring twigs ~~at~~ to the core;
I saw his tongue, & crocus-coloured bill
Parting & closing as he turned his trill;
~~And~~ Then he flew down, ~~hopped up~~ seized on a stem of hay,
And ~~rose~~ upped to where his building scheme was under way,
As if so sure a nest were never shaped on spray.

A Nightmare, & the next Thing.

On this decline of Christmas Day
The empty street ~~with fog is~~ is fogged & blurred:
The house-fronts all seem backwise turned
As if the outer world were spurned:
Voices & songs within are heard,
Whence red rays gleam ~~at~~ when fires are stirred,
Upon this nightmare Christmas Day.

The lamps, just lit, ~~amid the gloom~~ in misty begin to outloom
Like dandelion-globes ~~outloom~~ in the gloom;
The stonework, shop-signs, doors, look ~~bare~~ bald:
~~New structural~~
~~The architectural~~ Curious crude details ~~stare~~ seem installed,
And show themselves in their degrees
As they were personalities
Never ~~Discerned~~ ~~not~~ Discerned when the street was bustling
With vehicles, & farmers hustling.

Three clammy casuals wend their way
To the Union House. I hear one say:
"Jimmy, this is a treat! Hay-hay!"

Six laughing mouths, six rows of teeth,
Six radiant pairs of eyes, beneath
Six yellow hats, looking out at the back
Of a waggonette on its ~~foggy~~ slowed-down track
Up the steep street to some gay dance,
Suddenly ~~cross my pondering~~ interrupt my glance.

They do not see a gray nightmare
Astride the day, or anywhere.

To a Tree in London

Here you stay
Night & day.
Never never going away!

Do you ache
When we take
Holiday for our health's sake?

Wish for feet
When the heat
Scalds you in the brick-built street,

That you might
Climb ~~some~~ the height
Where your ancestry saw light;

Find a brook
In some nook
There to purge your swarthy look?

No. You read
Trees to need
Smoke like earth whereon to feed....

Thus, black, blind,
You have opined
Nothing of your brightest kind;

Never seen
Miles of green,
Smelt the landscape's sweet serene.

192–

The ~~Thrown~~ Felled Elm & She.

When you put on that inmost ring
She, like you, was a little thing:
When your circles reached their fourth,
Scarce she knew life's south from north:
When your year-zones counted twenty
She had fond admirers plenty:
When you'd grown your twentysecond
She & I were lovers reckoned:
When you numbered twentythree
She went everywhere with me:
When you, at your fortieth line
Showed decay, she seemed to pine:
When you were quite hollow within
She ~~sought earth~~ was felled – mere bone & skin:
You too, lacking strength to grow
Further trunk-rings, were laid low,
Matching her; both unaware
That your lives formed such a pair.

He did not know me.

(Woman's Sorrow-song.)

He said: "I do not know you:
You are not she who came
And made my heart grow tame!"
I ~~said:~~ laughed: "The same!"

Still said he: "I don't know you."
—"But I am your Love!" ~~said~~ laughed I:
["Yours—faithful—ever—till I die,
And pulseless lie!"

Yet he said: "I don't know you."
~~Sad struck~~ Freakful, I went away,
And met ~~grey~~ pale Time, with "Pray,
What means his Nay?"

Said Time: "He does not know you
In your mask of Comedy."
[—"But," said I, "That I have chosen to be:
Tragedy he."

—"~~And~~ ~~True:~~ hence he did not know you."
—"But him I could recognize?"
—"Yea. Tragedy is true guise,
Comedy lies!"

So Various.

You may have met a man – quite young –
A brisk-eyed youth, & highly strung:
One whose desires
And inner fires
Moved him as wires.

And, you may have met one ~~clearly~~ stiff & old,
~~Though~~ If not in years; of manner cold;
Who seemed as stone,
And never had known
Of mirth or moan.

And there may have crossed your path a lover,
In whose clear depths you could discover
A staunch, robust,
And ~~untorn~~ tender trust,
Through storm and gust.
~~till hearts were dust~~.

And you may have also known one fickle,
Whose fancies changed as the silver sickle
Of yonder moon,
Which shapes so soon
To demilune!

You entertained a person once
Whom you internally deemed a dunce: –
As he sat in view
Just facing you
You saw him through.

You ~~were introduced to~~ came to know a learned seer
Of whom you read the surface mere:
Your ~~heart~~ soul quite sank;
tr. ~~You seemed~~ Dubbed yours a blank.
~~to a Mind~~ Brain × of such rank

Anon you quizzed a man of Sadness,
Who never could have known true gladness.
Just for a whim
You pitied him
In his sore trim.

You journeyed with a man so glad
You never could conceive him sad:
He proved to be
Indubitably
Good Company.

You ~~popped~~ lit on an unadventurous slow man,
Who, (you) said, need be feared by no man:
That his slack deeds
And sloth must needs
Produce but weeds.

A man of enterprize, shrewd & swift,
Who never suffered affairs to drift,
You eyed for a time
Just in his prime,
And judged he ~~would~~ might climb.

You smoked beside one who forgot
All that you said, or grasped it not.

Quite a poor thing,
Not worth ~~the~~ a ~~fling~~ sting
~~Of~~ By satirizing!

Next year you nearly lost for ever
~~One who, you found,~~ Goodwill from one who forgot ~~the facts~~ slights never;
And, with unease,
Felt you must seize
Occasion to please . . .

Now . . . . . All these specimens of man,
So various in their pith & plan,
Curious to say
Were *one* man. Yea,
I was all they . .

A Self-glamourer.

My little happiness,
How much I have made of it! —
As if I had been not less
Than a queen, to be straight obeyed of it.
~~When I said~~ "Life, ~~Be~~ be fairer far,"
I said, "Than you ~~really~~ are."

—

So I counted my springtime-day's
Dream of futurity
Enringed with golden rays
To be quite a summer surety;
And my trustful daring undoubt
Brought it about!

—

Events all human-wrought
Had look of divinity,
And what I foreframed in thought
Grew substanced, by force of affinity:
Visions to verities came,
Seen as the same.

—

My ~~life~~ years in trusting spent
Make~~s~~ to shape towardly,
And fate & accident
Behave not perversely or frowardly.
Shall, then, Life's winter snow
To me be so?

The Dead Bastard.

Many & many a time I thought,
"Would my child ~~[illegible]~~ were in its grave!"
Such the trouble & shame it brought.

Now 'tis there. And now I'd brave
Opinion's worst, in word or act,
~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ to have that child alive; yes, slave

To dress & flaunt it to attract;
Show it the gossips brazenly,
And let as nothing be the fact
That never its father married me.

Clasp d

The Clasped Skeletons

Surmised date 1800 B. C.

(In an Ancient British Barrow near the Writer's House.)

O why did we uncover to view
So closely clasped a pair?
Your chalky bedclothes over you,
This long time here!

Ere Paris lay with Helena –
The poets' dearest Dear –
Ere David bedded Bathsheba
You two were bedded here.

Aye, even before the beauteous Jael
Bade Sisera doff his gear
And lie in her tent; then drove the nail,
You two lay here.

Wicked Aholah, in her youth,
Colled Loves from far & near
Until they slew her without ruth:
But you had long colled here.

Aspasia lay with Pericles,
And Philip's son, ~~[illegible]~~ - ~~[illegible]~~ found cheer
~~Much loved to lie~~ At eves in lying on Thais' Knees
While you lay here.

Cleopatra with Antony,
Resigned to dalliance sheer,
Lay, fatuous he, insatiate she,
Long after you'd ~~lay~~ lain here.

Pilate by Procula his wife
Lay tossing at her tear
~~In~~ of pleading for an innocent life:
You tossed not here.

Ages before Monk Abélard
Gained tender Héloise' ear,
And loved & lay with her till scarred,
Had you lain loving here.

So long, beyond chronology,
Lovers in death as 'twere,
So long in placid dignity
Have you lain here!

Yet what is length of time? But dream!
Once breathed this atmosphere
Those fossils near you, met the gleam
Of day as you did here;

But so far earlier theirs beside
Your life-span & career,
That they might style of yestertide
Your coming here!

In the Marquee

It was near last century's ending,
And, though not much to rate
In a world of getting & spending,
To her it was great.

The scene was a London suburb
On a night of summer weather,
And the villas had back gardens
Running together.

Her neighbours behind were dancing
Under a marquee:
Two violoncellos played there,
And violins three.

She had not been invited,
Although her lover was;
She lay beside her husband,
Perplexed at the cause.

Sweet after sweet quadrille rang:
Absence made her weep:
The tears dried on her eyelids
As she fell asleep.

She dreamt she was whirling with him
In this dance upon the green
To which she was not invited
Though her lover had been.

All

3/ [illegible]

All night she danced as he clasped her —
That is, in the happy dream
The music kept her dreaming
Till the first daybeam.

"O damn those noisy fiddles!"
Her husband said as he turned:
"Close to a neighbour's bedroom:
I'd like them burned!"

At intervals thus all night-long
Her husband swore. But she
Slept on, & danced in the loved arms,
Under the marquee.

Next day she found that her lover,
Though asked, had gone elsewhere,
And that she had possessed him in absence
More than if there.

After the Burial

The family had buried him,
Their bread-bringer, their best:
They had returned to the house, whose hush a dim
Vague vacancy expressed.

There sat his sons, mute, rigid-faced,
His daughters, strained, red-eyed,
His wife, whose wan, worn features, vigil-traced,
Bent over him when he died.

At once a peal bursts from the bells
Of a large tall tower ~~that rose~~ hard by:
Along the street the jocund clangour swells,
And upward to the sky.

Probably it was a wedding-peal,
Or possibly for a birth,
Or townsman knighted for political zeal,
This resonant mark of mirth.

The mourners, heavy-browed, sat on
Motionless. Well they heard,
They could not help it; nevertheless thereon
Spoke not a single word,

Nor window did they close, to numb
The bells insistent calls
Of joy; but suffered the harassing din to come
And penetrate their souls.

The Mongrel.

In Havenpool Harbour the ebb was strong,
And a man with a dog ~~on the quay-kerb~~ drew near and hung,
And taxpaying day was coming along,
So the mongrel had to be drowned.
The man threw a stick from the paved wharf-side
Into the midst of the ebbing tide,
And the dog jumped after with ardent pride
To bring the stick aground.

But no: the steady suck of the flood
To seaward needed, to be withstood,
~~The utmost strain~~ More than the strength of mongrelhood
To fight its treacherous trend.
So, swimming for life with desperate will,
The ~~creature~~ struggler with all his ~~dying~~ natant skill
Kept ~~afloat~~ buoyant in front of his master, still
There standing to wait the end.

The loving eyes of the dog inclined
To the ~~one~~ man he held as a god enshrined,
With no suspicion in his mind
That this had all been meant.
Till the effort not to drift from shore
Of his little legs grew slower & slower,
And, the tide still outing with ~~steady~~ brookless power,
Outward the dog, too, went.

just

Mongrel

Just ere his sinking what does one see
Break on the face of that devotee?
A wakening to the treachery
He had loved with love so blind?
The faith that had shone in that mongrel's eye
That his owner would save him by & by
Turned to much like a curse as he sank to die,
And a loathing of mankind.

Concerning Agnes.

I am stopped from hoping what I have hoped before –
Yes, many a time! –
To dance with that fair woman yet once more
As in the prime
Of August, when the ~~broad~~ wide-faced moon looked through
The boughs at the faery lamps of the Larmer Avenue.

I could not, though I ~~wished~~ should wish, have over again
That old romance,
And sit apart in the shade as we sat then
After the dance
The while I held her hand, &, to the booms
Of contrabassos, feet still pulsed from ~~beyond the gloom~~ the distant rooms.

I could not. And you do not ask me why.
Hence you infer
That what may chance to the fairest under the sky
Has chanced to her.
Yes. She lies white, straight, features marble-keen,
Unapproachable, mute, in a nook I have never seen.

There she may rest like some vague goddess, shaped
As out of snow;
Say Aphrodite sleeping; or bedraped
Like Kalupso;
Or Amphitrite stretched on the Mid-sea swell,
Or one of the Nine grown stiff from thought. I cannot tell!

Henley Regatta.

She looks from the window: still it pours down direly,
And the avenue drips. She cannot go, she fears;
And the Regatta will be spoilt entirely;
And she ~~succumbs to~~ sheds half-crazed tears.

Regatta Day & rain come on together
Again, years after. Gutters trickle loud;
But Nancy cares not. She knows nought of weather,
Or of the Henley crowd:

She's a Regatta quite her own. Inanely
She laughs ~~& sets out little paper boats~~ in the asylum as she floats
Within a water-tub, which she calls "Henley",
~~As round each pigmy floats~~ Her little paper boats.

An Evening in Galilee

She looks far west towards Carmel, shading her eyes with her hand,
And she looks then east to the Jordan, & the smooth Tiberias' strand.
"Is my son mad?" she asks; & never an answer has she,
Save from her ~~own mind~~ self, aghast at the possibility.
"He professes as his ~~[illegible]~~ firm faiths things far too grotesque ~~[illegible]~~ to be true,
And his vesture is odd — too careless for one of his fair young hue!....

"He lays down doctrines as if he were old — aye, fifty at least:
In the Temple he terrified me, opposing the very High-Priest!
Why did he say to me, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'
O it cuts to the heart that a child of mine thus spoke to me!
And he said, too, 'Who is my mother?' — when he knows so very well.
He might have said, 'Who is my father?' — & I'd found it hard to tell!
That no one knows but ~~he~~ Joseph ~~[illegible]~~ and — one other, nor ever will;
One who'll not see me again.... How it chanced! — ~~So swift a mystery all of it was, &~~ I dreaming no ill!....

"~~I~~ Would he'd not mix with the lowest folk — like those ~~[illegible]~~ fishermen —
The while so capable, culling new knowledge, beyond our ken!....
That woman of no good character, ever following him,
~~She loves~~ Adores him if I mistake not: his ~~[illegible]~~ wish of her is but ~~a~~ ~~[illegible]~~ a whim
Of ~~[illegible]~~ his madness, it may be, ~~[illegible]~~ outmarking his lack of coherency;
After his 'Keep the commandments!' to smile upon such as she!
It is just what all those do who are wandering in their wit.
I don't know — dare not say — what harm may grow from it.
O a mad son is a terrible thing; it even may lead
To arrest, & death!.... And how he can preach, expound, & read!

"Here comes my husband. Shall I unveil him this tragedy-brink?
No. He has, nightmares enough. I'll pray, & think, & think"....
She remembers she's never put on any pot for his evening meal,
And pondering a plea looks vaguely to south of her towards Jezreel.

The Brother.

O know you what ~~you~~ I have done
To avenge our sister? She,
I thought, was wantoned with
By a man of levity:

And I lay in wait all day,
All day did I wait for him,
And dogged him to Bollard Head
When twilight dwindled dim,

And hurled him over the edge
And heard him fall below:
O would I were lying with him,
For the truth I did not know!

"O where's my husband?" she asked,
As ~~the~~ evening wore away:
"Best you had one, forsooth,
But never had you!" I say.

"Yes, but I have!" says she,
"My Love made it up with me,
And we churched it yesterday
And mean to live happily."

And now I go in haste
To the Head, before she's aware,
To join him in death for the wrong
I've done them both out there!

We Field-Women.

5 How it rained
When we worked at Flintcomb-Ash,
And could not stand upon the hill
Trimming swedes for the slicing-mill.
The Wet washed through us — plash, plash, plash:
How it rained!

How it snowed
When we crossed from Flintcomb-Ash
To the Great Barn for drawing reed,
Since we could nowise chop a swede.—
Flakes in each doorway & casement-sash:
How it snowed!

How it shone
When we went from Flintcomb-Ash
To start at dairywork once more
In the laughing meads, with cows threescore,
And pails, & songs, & love — too rash:
How it shone!

A Practical Woman.

"O who'll get me a healthy child:—
I should prefer a son—
Seven have I had in thirteen years,
Sickly every one!

"Three mope about as feeble ~~forms,~~ shapes;
Weak; white; they'll be no good.
One came deformed; an idiot next;
And two are crass as wood.

"I purpose one not only sound
In flesh, but bright in mind:
And duty for producing him
A means I've now to find."

She went away. She disappeared,
Years, years. Then back she came:
In her hand was a blooming boy
Mentally & in frame.

"I found a father at last who'd suit
The purpose in my head,
And used him till he'd done his job,"
Was all thereon she said.

Squire Hooper.

Hooper was ninety. ~~old~~ One September ~~early~~ dawn
He sent a messenger
For his physician, who asked thereupon
What ailed the sufferer
Which he might circumvent, & promptly bid begone.

"Doctor, I summoned you," the squire replied—
"Pooh-pooh me ~~as~~ though you may—
To ask what's happened to me—burst inside,
It seems—not much, I'd ~~[illegible]~~ say—
But awkward with a ~~[illegible]~~ house-full ~~of men I've~~ here for a shoot to-day."

And he described the symptoms. With bent head
The listener looked grave.
"H'm..... You're a dead man in six hours," he said.—
"I speak out, since you are brave—
And best 'tis you should know, that last things may be sped."

"Right," said the squire. "And now comes—what to do?
One thing: on no account
Must I now spoil the sport I've asked them to—
My guests are paramount—
They must scour ~~thread~~ scrub & stubble; & big bags bring ~~back~~ ~~home~~ as due."

He downed to breakfast, & bespoke his guests:—
"I find I have to go
An unexpected journey, & it rests
With you, my friends, to show
The shoot can go off gaily, whether I'm there or no."

Thus blandly spoke he; & to the fields they went,
And Hooper up the stair.
They had a glorious day; & stiff & spent
Returned as dusk drew near.—
"Gentlemen," said the doctor, "he's not back as meant,

To his deep regret!"— So they took leave, each guest
Observing: "I dare say
Business detains him in the town: 'tis best
We should no longer stay
Just now. We'll come again anon;" & they went their way.

Meeting two men in the obscurity
Shouldering a box a thin
Cloth-covering wrapt, One sportsman cried: "Damn me,
I thought them carrying in,
At first, a coffin; till I knew it could not be."

[Harpers Magazine
through Mr Wells.]
Dec. 1927

"A Gentleman's Second-hand Suit."

By Thomas Hardy

Here it is hanging in the sun
By the pawn-shop door,
A dress-suit – all its revels done
Of heretofore.
~~Well-used~~ Long drilled to the waltzers' swing & sway,
As ~~its~~ tokens show:
What it has seen, what it could say
If it did but know!

Dab

The sleeve bears still ~~some puff~~ a print of powder
Rubbed from her arms
When she warmed up as the notes swelled louder
And livened her charms –
Or rather theirs, for beauties many
Leant there, no doubt,
Leaving these tell-tale traces when he
~~whirled~~ Spun them about.

Its cut seems rather in bygone style
On looking close,
So it mayn't have ~~given~~ bent it for some while
To the dancing pose:

Anyhow,

Dress suit 2

Anyhow, often within its clasp
Fair partners hung,
Assenting to the wearer's grasp
With soft sweet tongue.

Where is, alas, the gentleman
Who ~~sported~~ wore this suit?
And where are his ladies? Tell none can:
Gossip is mute.
Some of them may forget him quite
Who smudged his sleeve,
Some think of a wild & whirling night
With him, & grieve.

"We say we shall not meet"

We say we shall not meet
Again ~~[illegible]~~ beneath this sky,
And turn with heavy feet,
Murmuring "Good-bye!"

But laugh at how we rued
Our formertime's adieu
When those who went for good
Are met anew.

We talk in lightest vein
On trifles talked before,
And part to meet again,
But meet no more.

Seeing the Moon Rise

We used to go to Froom-hill Barrow
the round hill to
To see Diana rise
Into the heath-rimmed skies,
Trudging thither by plough & harrow
Up the pathway, steep & narrow,
Singing a song.
Now we do not go there. Why?
Zest burns not so high
~~fails – tends, to die~~!

Latterly we've only conned her
With a passing glance
From window or door by chance,
Hoping to go again, high yonder,
As we used, & gaze, & ponder,
Singing a song.
Thitherward we do not go:
Feet once quick are slow!

August: 1927.

Song to Aurore

We'll not begin again to love,
It only leads to pain;
The fire we now are master of
Has seared us not in vain.
Any new step of yours I'm fain
To hear of from afar,
And even in such may find a gain
While lodged not where you are.

No: that must not be done anew
Which has been done before;
I ~~cannot~~ could scarce bear to seek, or view,
Or clasp you any more!
Life is a labour, death is sore,
And lonely living wrings;
But go your courses, sweet Aurore,
Kisses are ~~perilous~~ caresome things!

He never expected much
[or]
A consideration
A reflection on my eighty-sixth birthday

Well, World, you have kept faith with me,
~~Yes~~ Kept faith with me;
Upon the whole you have proved to be
Much as you said you were.
Since as a child I used to lie
Upon the leaze & watch the sky,
Never, I own, expected I
That life would all be fair.

'Twas then you said, & since have said,
Times since have said,
In that mysterious voice you shed
From clouds & hills around:
"Many have loved me desperately,
Many with smooth serenity,
While some have shown contempt of me
Till they dropped underground.

"I do not promise overmuch,
Child; overmuch;
Just neutral-tinted haps & such,"
You said to minds like mine.
Wise warning for your credit's sake!
Which I for one failed not to take,
And hence could stem such strain & ache
As each year might assign.

Standing by the Mantelpiece

(H.M.M. 1873)

This candle-wax is shaping to a shroud
To-night. (They call it that, as you may know) —
By touching it the claimant is avowed,
And hence I press it with my finger — so.

To-night. To me twice night, that should have been
The radiance of the midmost tick of noon,
And close around me wintertime is seen
That might have shone the veriest day of June!

But since all's lost, & nothing really lies
Above but shade, & shadier shade below
Let me make clear, before one of us dies,
My mind to yours, just now embittered so.

Since you agreed, unurged & full-advised,
And let warmth grow without discouragement,
Why do you bear you now as if surprised,
When what has come was clearly consequent?

Since you have spoken, & finality
Closes around, & my last movements loom,
I say no more: the rest must wait till we
Are face to face again, yonside the tomb.

And let the candle-wax thus mould a shape
Whose meaning now, if hid before, you know,
And how by touch one present claims its drape,
And that it's I who press my finger — so.

Boys then & now.

"More than one cuckoo?"
And the little boy
Seemed to lose something
Of his spring joy.

When he'd grown up
He told his son
He'd used to think
There was only one,

Who came each year
With the trees' new trim
On purpose to please
England & him:

And his son – old already
In life & its ways –
Said yawning: "How foolish
Boys were in those days!"

That Kiss in the Dark.

Recall it you? –
Say you do! –
When you went out into the night,
In an impatience that would not wait,
~~At~~ From that lone ~~lonely country~~ house in the woodland spot,
And when I, thinking you had gone
For ever & ever from my sight,
Came after, printing a kiss upon
Black air
In my despair,
And my two lips lit on your cheek
As you leant silent against a gate,
Making my woman's face flush hot
At what I had done in the dark, unware
You lingered for me but would not speak:
Yes, kissed you, thinking you were not there!
Recall it you? –
Say you do!

A Necessitarian's Epitaph.

A world I did not wish to enter
Took me & poised me on my centre,
Made me grimace, & foot, & prance,
As cats on hot bricks have to dance
Strange ~~figures to avoid~~ jigs to keep them from the floor,
Till they sink down & feel no more.

Holly 1

Burning the Holly.

O you are sad on Twelfth Night,
I notice: sad on Twelfth Night;
You are as sad on Twelfth Night
As any that I know.

"Yes: I am sad on that night,
Doubtless ~~[illegible]~~ I'm sad on that night:
Yes; I am sad on that night,
~~And well I may be~~ For we all loved her so!"

Why are you sad on Twelfth Night,
Especially on Twelfth Night?
Why are you sad on Twelfth Night
When wit & laughter flow?

— "She'd been a famous dancer,
~~[illegible] butterfly~~ Much lured of men; a dancer.
She'd been a famous dancer,
Facile in heel & toe....

"And we were burning the holly
On Twelfth Night; the holly,
As people do: the holly,
Ivy, & mistletoe.

"And while it popped & crackled,
~~Amid the hearth-logs on~~ ~~watching~~ (She being our lodger), crackled:
And while it popped & crackled,
~~And spluttered~~ Her face caught by the glow,

"In he walked & said to her,
In a ~~dry~~ slow voice he said to her;
Yes, walking in he said to her,
'We sail before cock-crow.'

"'Why did you not come ~~out~~ on to me,
As promised? Yes, come ~~out~~ on to me?
Why did you not come ~~out~~ on to me,
Since you had sworn to go?'

"His eyes were deep & flashing,
As flashed the holm-flames: flashing;
His eyes were deep, & flashing
In their quick, keen upthrow.

"As if she had been ready,
Had furtively been ready:
As if she had been ready
For his insistance — lo! —

"She clasped his arm & went with him
As his entirely: went with him.
She clasped his arm & went with him
Into the sprinkling snow.

"We saw the prickly leaves waste
To ashes: saw the leaves waste;
The burnt-up prickly leaves waste....
The pair had gone also.

—"On Twelfth Night, two years after —
Yes, Twelfth Night, two years after;
On Twelfth Night, two years after,
We sat — our spirits low —

"Musing, when back the door swung
Without a knock. The door swung;
Thought ~~flashed~~ flew ~~on~~ to her. The door swung,
And in she came, pale, slow;

"Against her breast a child clasped:
Close to her breast a child clasped;
She stood there with the child clasped,
Swaying it to & fro.

"Her look alone the tale told;
~~Without~~ Quite wordless was the tale told;
Her careworn eyes the tale told
As larger they seemed to grow. . . .

"One day next spring she disappeared,
The second time she disappeared.
And that time, when she'd disappeared
Came back no more. Ah, no!

But we still burn the holly
On Twelfth Night; burn the holly
As people do: the holly,
Ivy, & mistletoe.

Suspense.

A clamminess hangs over all like a clout,
The fields are a water-colour washed out,
The sky at its rim leaves a chink of light,
Like the lid of a pot that will not close tight.

She is away by the groaning sea,
Strained at the heart, & waiting for me:
Between us our foe from a hid retreat
Is watching, to wither us if we meet....

But it matters little, however we fare—
Whether we meet, or I get not there;
The sky will look the same thereupon,
And the wind + the sea go groaning on.

The Second Visit.

Clack, clack, clack, went the mill-wheel as I came,
And she was on the bridge with the thin hand-rail,
And the miller at the door, & the ducks at mill-tail;
I come again years after, & all there seems the same.

And so indeed it is: the ~~mullion-windowed~~ apple-tree'd old house,
And the deep mill pond, & the wet wheel clacking,
And a woman on the bridge, & white ducks quacking,
And the miller at the door, powdered pale from boots to brows.

But it's not the same miller whom long ago I knew,
Nor ~~so~~ are they ~~green~~ the same apples, nor the ~~water~~ same drops that dash
Over the wet wheel, nor the ducks below that splash,
Nor the woman who to ~~my~~ fond plaints replied, "You know I do!"

Our old friend Dualism.

All hail to him, the Protean! A tough old chap is he:
Spinoza & the Monists cannot make him cease to be.
We pound him with our "Truth, Sir, please!" & quite appear to still him:
He laughs: holds Bergson up, & James; & swears we cannot kill him.
We argue them pragmatic cheats. "Aye," says he. "They're deceiving:
But I must live; for flamens plead I am all that's worth believing!"

1920.

Faithful Wilson.

"I say she's handsome, by all laws
Of beauty, if wife ever was!"
Wilson insists thus, though each day
The years fret Fanny towards decay.
"She *was* once beauteous as a jewel",
Hint friends; "but Time, of course, is cruel."
Still Wilson does not quite feel how,
Once fair, she can be different now.

Partly from Strato of Sardis.

Gallant's Song

When the maiden leaves off teasing,
Then the man may leave off pleasing:
Yea, 'tis sign,
Wet or fine,
She will love him without ceasing
With a love there's no appeasing.
Is it so?
Ha-ha. Ho!

Nov. 1868.
from an old note book.

Philo

v

A Philosophical Fantasy

[Published in Fortnightly Review, slightly abridged, Jan - 1927.]

small Rom. ["Milton . . . . made God argue." – Walter Bagehot.

"Well, if thou wilt, then, ask me;
To answer will not task me:
I've a response, I doubt not,
And quite agree to flout not
Thy question, if of reason,
Albeit not quite in season:
A universe to marshal,
What god can give but partial
Eye to frail Earth – life-shotten
Ere long, extinct, forgotten! –
But seeing indications
That thou read'st my limitations,
And since my lack of forethought
Aggrieves thy more & more thought,
I'll hearken to thy pleading:
Some lore may lie in heeding
Thy irregular proceeding."

—

"'Tis this unfulfilled intention,
O Causer, I would mention: –
Will you, in condescension
This evening, ere we've parted,
Say why you felt fainthearted,
And let your aim be thwarted,
Its glory be diminished,
Its concept stand unfinished? –
Such I ask you, Sir or Madam,
(I know no more than Adam,

9°

Even vaguely; what your sex is, —
Though feminine I had thought you
Till seers as 'Sire' besought you; —
And this my ignorance vexes
Some people not a little,
And, though not me one tittle,
It makes me sometimes choose me
Call you 'It,' if you'll excuse me?")

—

"Call me 'It' with a good conscience,
And be sure it is all nonsense
That I mind a fault of manner
In a pigmy towards his planner!
Be I, be not I, sexless,
I am in nature vexless.
— How vain must clay-carved man be
To deem such folly can be
As that freaks of my own framing
Can set my visage flaming —
Start me volleying interjections
Against my own confections,
As the Jews & others limned me,
And in fear & trembling hymned me!
Call me 'but dream-projected';
I shall not be affected;
Call me 'blind force persisting';
I shall remain unlisting;
(A few have done it lately,
And, maybe, err not greatly.)
— Another such a vanity
In witless weak humanity
Is thinking that of those all
Through space at my disposal.

Maris

Man's
~~His~~ shape must needs resemble
Mine, that makes zodiacs tremble!

"Continuing where we started:—
As for my aims being thwarted,
Wherefore I feel fainthearted,
Aimless am I, revealing
No heart-scope for faint feeling.
—But thy mistake I'll pardon,
And, as Adam's mentioned to me,
(Though in timeless truth there never
Was a man like him whatever,)
I'll meet thee in thy garden,
As I did not him, beshrew me!
In the ~~cool~~ sun of so-called daytime—
Say, just about the Maytime
Of my next, or next, Creation?
(I love procrastination,
To use the words in thy sense,
Which ~~hath~~ have no hold on my sense)
Or at any future stray-time—
One of thy representatives
In some later incarnation
I mean, of course, well knowing
Thy present conformation
But a unit of my tentatives,
Whereof such heaps lie blowing
As dust, where thou art going;
Yea, passed to where suns glow not,
Bereaved of those that go not,
(Though what grief is, I know not.)

"Perhaps I may inform thee,

In case I should alarm thee,
That no dramatic stories
Like ancient ones whose core is —
A mass of superstition
And monkish imposition
Will mark my explanation
Of the world's sore situation
(As thou tell'st), with woes that shatter;
Though from former aions to latter
To me 'tis malleable matter
For treatment scientific
More than sensitive & specific —
Stuff without moral features,
Which I've no sense of ever,
Or of ethical endeavour,
Or of justice to Earth's creatures,
Or how Right from Wrong to sever:
Let these ~~may~~ be as men learn ~~them~~ such;
For me, I don't discern such,
And, ~~though clear~~ real enough I daresay —
I know them but by hearsay
As something Time hath rendered
Out of substance I engendered,
Time, too, being a ~~suppos~~condition
Beyond my recognition.
— I would add that, while unknowing
Of this justice earthward owing,
Nor explanation ~~me~~ offering
Of what is meant by suffering,
Thereof I'm not a spurner,
Or averse to be a learner.

93

"To return from wordy wandering
To the question we we pondering;
Though, ~~in~~ viewing the world ~~work~~ in *my* mode,
I fail to see it in *thy* mode
As 'unfulfilled intention',
Which is past my comprehension
Being unconscious in my doings
So largely, (whence thy rueings); —
~~H~~aye, to human tribes nor kindlessness
Nor love I've given, but mindlessness,
Which state, though far from ending,
May nevertheless be mending.

"However, I'll advise him —
Him thy scion, who will walk here
When Death hath dumbed thy talk here —
In phrase that may surprise him,
What thing it was befel me,
(A thing that my confessing
Lack of forethought helps thy guessing),
And acted to compel me
By that *purposeless propension*
Which is mine, & not intention,
Along lines of least resistance,
Or, in brief, unsensed persistence,
That saddens thy existence
To think my so-called scheming
Not that of my first dreaming.

1920 & 1926.

A Question of Marriage.

"I yield you my whole heart, Countess," said he;
"Come, Dear, & be queen of my studio."
Why not painter? "No, ~~painter~~ sculptor, you're merely my friend," said she:
"We dine our artists; but marry them — no."

"Be it thus," he replied. And his love, so strong,
He subdued as a stoic should. Anon
He wived some damsel who'd loved him long,
Of lineage noteless; and chiselled on.

And a score years passed. As a master-mind
The world made much of his marching fame,
And his wife's little charms, with his own entwined,
Won day after day increased acclaim.

The countess-widow had closed with a mate
In rank & wealth of her own degree,
And they moved among the obscurely great
Of an order that had no novelty.

And oldening — neither with blame nor praise —
Their stately lives begot no stir,
And she saw that when death should efface her days
~~The world~~ All men would abandon thought of her;

And said to herself full gloomily:
"Far better for me had it been to shine
The wench of a ~~sculptor~~ genius such as he
Than rust as the wife of a spouse like mine!"

The Letter's Triumph

(A Fancy.)

Yes: I perceive it's to your Love
You are bent on sending me. That this is so
Your words & phrases prove!

And now I am folded, & start to go
Where you, my writer, have no leave ~~to come~~:
My entry none will know!

And I shall catch her eye, & dumb
She'll keep, should my unnoised arrival be
Hoped for, or troublesome.

My face she'll notice readily:
And, whether she care to meet you, or care not,
She will perforce meet me;

Take me to closet or garden-plot
And, blushing or pouting, bend her eyes quite near,
Moved much, or never a jot.

And while you wait in hope & fear,
Far ~~[illegible]~~ from her cheeks & lips, snug I shall stay
In close communion there,

And hear her heart-beats, ~~at times~~ things ~~what~~ she may say,
As near her naked fingers, sleeve, or glove
I lie - ha-ha! - all day.

Based on an incident.

A Forgotten Miniature

There you are in the dark,
Deep in a box
Nobody ever unlocks,
Or even turns to mark;
– Out of mind stark.

Yet there you have not been worsed
Like your sitter
By Time, the Fair's hard-hitter;
Your beauties, undispersed,
Glow as at first.

Shut in your case for years,
Never an eye
Of the many passing nigh,
Fixed on their own affairs,
Thinks what it nears!

– While you have lain in gloom,
A form forgot,
Your reign remembered not,
Much life has come to bloom
Within this room.

in Time's cyclic sweep
Yea, ~~since your durance there~~
Unrest r
~~Life~~ has ~~ch~~anged:
Women men
~~Men's hearts~~ & ~~hopes~~ have changed:
knew
Some ~~[illegible]~~ you slumber deep;
Some wait for sleep.

Whispered at the Church-opening

In the bran-new pulpit the bishop stands,
And gives out his text, as his gaze expands
To the people, the aisles, the roof's new frame,
And the arches, & ashlar with coloured bands.

"Why – he's the man," says one, "who came
To preach in my boyhood – a fashion then –
In a series of sermons to working-men
On week-day evenings, a novelty
Which brought ~~other~~ better folk to hear & see.
They preached ~~in succession~~ each one each week, by request:
Some were eloquent speakers, among the best
Of the lot being this ~~one~~, as ~~hearers~~ all confessed."

"I remember now. And reflection brings
Back one ~~[illegible]~~ in especial, ~~[illegible]~~ sincerest ~~[illegible]~~ of all;
Whose ~~[illegible]~~ words, though unpicked, gave the essence of things:—
And where is he now, whom I well recall?"

"Oh, he'd no Touches of tactic skill:
His mind ran on charity & good will:
He's but as he was, a vicar still."

In Weatherbury Stocks.

(1850.)

"I sit here in these stocks,
And Saint-Mary's moans eleven;
The sky is dark & cold:
I would I were in heaven!

—

"What footsteps do I hear?
Ah, you do not forget,
My Sophy ~~Becca~~! O, my dear,
We may be happy yet!

—

"But —. Mother, is't you voice?
You who have come to me?—
It did not cross my thought:
I was thinking it was she."

—

"She! Foolish simple son!
She says: 'I've finished quite
With him or any one
Put in the stocks to- ~~at~~ night.'

—

"She's gone to Blooms-End dance,
And will not come back yet:
Her new man sees his chance,
And is teaching her to forget.

—

"Jim, think no other woman
To such a fellow ~~In this wide world~~ is true
But the mother you have grieved so,
Or cares for one like you!"

A Placid Man's Epitaph.

As for my life, I've led it
With fair content & credit:
It said: "Take this." I took it:
Said; "Leave." And I forsook it.
If I had done without it
None would have cared about it,
Or said: "One has ~~not taken~~ refused it
Who might have ~~shattered, or even shaken it~~ meekly used ~~one~~ it".

1925

~~And~~ commented
or ~~murmured over~~ upon it
"A pity he did not own it"

The New Boots.

"They are his new boots," she pursued;
"~~He has~~ They have not been worn ~~them~~ at all:
They stay there hung on the wall,
And are getting as stiff as wood.
He bought them for the wet weather,
And they are of waterproof leather."

"Why does her husband," said I,
"Never wear those boots bought new?"
To a neighbour of hers I knew;
Who answered: "Ah, ~~was so~~ those boots: Aye,
He bought them to wear whenever
It rained. But there ~~[illegible]~~ they hang ever.

"'Yes,' he laughed, as he hung them up,
'I've got them at last – a pair
I can walk in anywhere
Through rain & slush & slop.
For many a year I've been haunted
By thoughts of how much they were wanted.'

"And she's not touched them or tried
To remove them .... Anyhow,
As you see them hanging now
They have hung ever since he died
The day after gaily declaring:
'Ha-ha! Now for wet wayfaring.
They're just the chaps for my wearing!'"

The ~~Imaginative~~ Musing Maiden.

"Why so often, silent one,
Do you steal away alone?"
Starting, she half turned her head,
And guiltily she said:—

"When the vane points to his far town
I go upon the hog-backed down,
And think the breeze that stroked his lip
Over my own may slip.

"When he walks at close of day
I ramble on the white highway,
And think it reaches to his feet:
~~In~~ A meditation sweet!

"When ~~barges~~ coasters hence to London sail
I watch their ~~sailbowed~~ puffed wings waning pale;
His window opens near the quay;
Their coming he can see.

"I ~~look upon~~ go to meet the moon at night;
To mark the moon was our delight;
Up there our eyesights touch at will
If such he practise still."

W.P.V.
October: 1866. (recopied.)

Lorna the Second.

Lorna! Yes, you are sweet,
But you are not your mother,
Lorna the First, ~~[illegible]~~ frank, feat,
Never such another! —
Love of her could smother
Griefs by day or night;
Nor could any other,
Lorna, dear & bright,
Ever so well adorn a
Mansion, coach, or cot,
Or make men so scorn a
Rival in their sight;
Even you could not!
~~[illegible]~~ Hence, I have to mourn a
Loss ere you were born; a
Lorna!

A Daughter Returns.

I like not that dainty-cut raiment, those earrings of pearl,
I like not the light in that eye;
I like not the note of that voice. Never so was the girl
Who a year ago bade me good-bye!

Hadst but come bare & moneyless, worn in the vamp, weather-gray,
But innocent still as before,
How warmly I'd lodged thee! But sport thy new gains far away;
I pray thee, now come here no more!

And yet I'll not try to blot out every memory of thee;
I'll think of thee – yes, now & then:
One who's watched thee since Time called thee out o' thy mother & me
Must think of thee; aye, I know when! ....

When the cold sneer of dawn follows night-shadows black as a hearse,
And the rain filters down the ~~elm~~ fruit tree,
And the tempest mouths into the flue-top a word like a curse,
Then, then I shall think, think of thee!

Dec. 17. 1901.

The Third Kissing-gate.

She foots it forward down the town,
Then leaves the lamps behind,
And trots along the eastern road
Where elms stand double-lined.

She clacks the first dim kissing-gate
Beneath the storm-strained trees,
And passes to the second mead
That fringes Mellstock Leaze.

She swings the second kissing-gate
Next the gray garden-wall,
And sees the third mead stretching down
Towards the waterfall.

And now the third-placed kissing-gate
Her silent shadow nears,
And ~~Closes~~ touches with; when suddenly
Her person disappears.

What chanced by that third kissing-gate
When the hushed mead grew dun?
Lo – two dark figures clasped & closed
As if they were but one.

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Drinking Song.

Once on a time ~~lived Thales~~ when thought began
Lived Thales: he
Was said to see
Vast truths that mortals seldom can:
It seems without
A moment's doubt
That everything was made for man.

Chorus. Fill full your cups: feel no distress
That thoughts so great should now be less!

Earth mid the sky stood firm & flat,
He held, till came
A sage by name
Copernicus, & righted that.
We trod, he told,
A globe that rolled
Around a sun it warmed it at.

Chorus. Fill full your cups: feel no distress;
'Tis only one great thought the less!

But still we held, as Time flew by
And wit increased,
Ours was, at least,
The only world whose rank was high:
Till rumours flew
From folk who knew
Of globes galore about the sky.

Chorus.—Fill full your cups, &c.

And that this earth, our one estate,
Was no prime ball,
The best of all,
But common, mean; indeed, tenth-rate:
And men, so proud,
A feeble crowd,
Unworthy any special fate.

Chorus.—Fill full your cups, &c.

Then rose one Hume, who could not see,
If earth were such,
Required were much
To prove no miracles could be:
"Better believe
The eyes deceive
Than that God's clockwork jolts," said he.

Chorus.—Fill full your cups, &c.

Next this strange message Darwin brings,
(Though saying his say
In a quiet way);
We all are one with creeping things:
And apes & men
Blood-brethren,
And likewise reptile forms with stings.

Chorus.—Fill full your cups, &c.

And when this philosoph had done
Came Doctor Cheyne:
Speaking plain he
Proved no virgin bore a son.
"Such tale, indeed,
Helps not our creed,"
He said. "A tale long known to none."

Chorus. - Fill full your cups, &c.

* * *

And now comes Einstein with a notion -
Not yet quite clear
To many here -
That's there's no time, no space, no motion,
Nor rathe nor late,
Nor square nor straight,
But just a sort of bending ether-ocean.

Chorus. - Fill full your cups, &c.

* * *

So here we are, in piteous case:
Like butterflies
Of many dyes
Upon an Alpine glacier's face:
To fly & cower
In some warm bower
Our chief concern in such a place.

Chorus. - Fill full your cups: feel no distress
At That all our great thoughts ~~have shrunk~~ Shrinking less:
We'll do a good deed nevertheless!

The Tarrying Bridegroom.

Wildly bound the bells this morning
For the glad solemnity;
People are adorning
~~Nave~~ Chancel & canopy;
But amid the peal a warning
Under-echo calls to me.

Where the lane divides the pasture
Long I watch each bend & stone.
Why not now as last year,
When he sought me, lone?
Come, O come, & see, & cast here
Light & love on one you own!

How it used to draw him to me,
When I piped ~~that~~ a pretty tune;
Yes, when first he knew me
In my pink shalloon:
Little I guessed 'twould so undo me
~~Missing~~ Lacking him this summer noon!

Copy made for Mr Shorter's Christmas number — sent Feb. 1925. appeared Xmas 1925

No Bell-ringing

A Ballad of Durnover.

The little boy ~~walked~~ legged on through the dark,
To hear the New-Year's ringing:
The three-mile road was empty, stark,
No sound or echo bringing.

When he got to the tall church tower
Standing upon the hill,
Although it was hard on the midnight hour
The place was, ~~just as~~ as elsewhere, still;

Except that the flag-staff rope, betossed
By blasts from the nor'-east,
Like a dead man's bones on a gibbet-post
Tugged as to be released.

"Why is there no ringing to-night?"
Said the boy to a ~~speech~~ moveless one
On a tombstone where the moon struck white;
But he got answer none.

"No ringing in of New Year's Day!"
~~"Why was there no ringing to-night?"~~
He mused as he dragged back home;
And wondered till his head was ~~white~~ gray
Why the ~~ringers did not come~~ bells that night were dumb.

And often thought of the snowy shape
That sat on the moonlit stone,
Nor spoke nor moved, & in mien & drape
Seemed like a sprite thereon.

And then he met one left of the band
That ~~he was~~ had treble-bobbed when young,
And said: "I never could understand
Why, that night, no bells rung."

"True. There'd not happened such a thing
For half a century; aye,
And never I've told why they did not ring
From that time till to-day.....

"Through the week in bliss at *The Hit or Miss* ✻
We had drunk – not a penny left;
What we then did – well, now 'tis hid, –
But better we'd stooped to theft!

"Yet, since none other remains who can,
And few more years are mine,
"I may tell you", said the cramped old man.
"We – ~~drank~~ swilled the Sacrament-wine.

"Then each set-to with the strength of two,
Every man to his bell;
But something was wrong we found ere long
Though what, we could not tell.

"We ~~rang~~ pulled till the sweat-drops fell around,
As we'd never ~~rang~~ pulled before,
An hour by the clock, but not one sound
Came down ~~from~~ through the bell-loft floor.

"On the morrow all folk of the same thing spoke,
They had stood at the midnight time
On their doorsteps near with a listening ear,
But there reached them never a chime.

"We then could read the dye of our deed,
And we knew we were accurst;
But we broke to none the thing we had done,
And since then never durst."

✻ An old tavern now demolished. The full legend over the door ran, "Hit or Miss: Luck's All!"

The Destined Pair.

Two beings ~~[illegible]~~ were drifting
Each one to the other:
No moment's ~~cloud~~ veil-lifting
Or hint from another
Led either to weet
That the tracks of their feet
Were ~~[illegible]~~ arcs that would meet.

One moved in a city,
And one in a village,
Where many a ditty
He tongued when at tillage
On dreams of ~~the~~ a dim
~~[illegible]~~ Figure fancy would limn
That was viewless to him.

Would Fate have been kinder
To keep night between them? –
Had he failed to find her
And time never seen them
Unite; so that, caught
~~By~~ In no burning love-thought,
~~Each~~ She had faded unsought?

A Musical Incident.

When I see the room it hurts me
As with a pricking blade,
Those women being the memoried reason why my cheer deserts me. –
'Twas thus. One of them played
To please her friend, not knowing
That friend was speedily growing,
Behind the player's chair,
Somnolent, unaware
Of any music there.

I saw it, & it distressed me,
For I had begun to think
I loved the ~~sleeping~~ drowsy listener, when this arose to test me
And tug me from love's brink.
"Beautiful!" said she, waking
As the music ceased. "Heart-aching!"
Though never a note she'd heard
To judge of as averred –
Save that of the very last word.

All would have faded in me,
But that the sleeper brought
News a week thence that her friend was dead. It stirred within me
Sense of injustice wrought
That dead player's ~~dead~~ poor intent –
So heartily, kindly meant –
As blandly added the sigher:
"How glad I am I was nigh her,
To hear her last time!" – "Liar!"
I lipped. – This gave love pause,
And killed it, such as it was.

June Leaves & Autumn.

I.

Lush summer lit the trees' ~~hue~~ to green;
But in the ditch hard by
Lay dying boughs some hand unseen
Had lopped when first with festal mien
They matched their mates on high.
It seemed a melancholy fate
That leaves but brought to birth so late
Should rust there, red & numb,
In quickened fall, while all their race
Still joyed aloft in pride of place
With store of days to come.

II.

At autumn-end I fared that way,
And traced those boughs fore-hewn
Whose leaves, awaiting their decay
In slowly browning shades, still lay
Where they had lain in June.
And now, no less embrowned & curst
Than if they had fallen with the first,
Nor known a morning more,
Lay there alongside, dun & sere,
Those that at my last wandering here
Had length of days in store.

Nov. 19. 1898.

"I looked back"

I looked back as I left the house,
And, past the chimneys & neighbour tree,
The moon upsidled through the boughs:—
I thought: "I shall a last time see
This picture; when will that time be?"

I paused amid the laugh-loud feast,
And selfward said: "I am sitting where,
Some night, when ancient songs have ceased,
"Now is the last time I shall share
Such ~~[illegible]~~ cheer", will be the thought I bear.

An eye-sweep back at a look-out corner
Upon a hill, as forenight wore,
Stirred me to think: "Ought I to warn her
That, though I come here times threescore,
One day 'twill be I come no more?"

Anon I reasoned there had been,
Ere quite forsaken ~~banished for~~ was ~~Before life [illegible]~~ each spot,
Bygones whereon I'd lastly seen
That house, that feast, that maid forgot;
Ah ~~But~~ when? — Ah ~~that~~ I remembered not!

The Aged Newspaper soliloquizes.

Yes; yes; I am old. In me appears
The history of a hundred years;
Empires', kings', captives', births & deaths / '/
Strange faiths, & fleeting shibboleths / ⊙
⊢/ ‸Tragedy, comedy, throngs my page
Beyond all mummed on any stage:
Cold hearts beat hot, hot hearts beat cold,
And I beat on. Yes; yes; I am old.

Thomas Hardy.

Omit [Published in *Observer*' 1926.]

Christmas: 1924.

"Peace upon earth!" was said. We sing it,
And ~~set~~ pay a million priests to bring it.
After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison-gas.

1924

The single Witness.

"Did no one else, then, see them, ~~any~~ man,
Lying among the whin?
Did no one else, ~~then, see~~ behold them at all
Commit this shameless sin,
But you, in the hollow of the down
~~Far Back from the highway Dim?~~ No Traveller's eye takes in?

"Nobody else, my noble lord,
Saw them together there –
~~Yes – your~~ ~~Your young~~ son's tutor & she. I ~~took~~ made
A short cut from the fair,
And lit on them. ~~Such sin should not~~ I've said no word
~~Be talked of~~ About it anywhere."

"~~Thus~~ Good.... ~~There~~ Now, you see my father's sword,
Hanging up in yon view:
No hand has swung it since he came
Home after Waterloo.
I'll show it you.... There is the sword:
~~Now,~~ And this is what I'll do."

He ran the other through the breast,
Ere he could plead or cry.
"It is a dire necessity,
But – since no one was nigh
Save ~~he~~ you & they, my historied name
Must not be smirched thereby."

How she went to Ireland

Dora's gone to Ireland
Through the sleet & snow;
Promptly she has gone there
In a ship, although
Why she's gone to Ireland
Dora does not know.

That was where, yea, Ireland,
Dora wished to be:
When she felt, in lone times,
Shoots of misery,
Often there, in Ireland,
Dora wished to be.

Hence she's gone to Ireland,
Since she meant to go,
Through the drift & darkness
Onward labouring, though
That she's gone to Ireland
Dora does not know.

Dead "Wessex" the Dog to the Household.

Do you think of me at all,
Wistful ones?
Do you think of me at all
As if nigh?
Do you think of me at all
At the creep of evenfall,
Or when the sky-birds call
As they fly?

Do you look for me at times,
Wistful ones?
Do you look for me at times
Strained & still?
Do you look for me at times,
When the hour for walking chimes,
On that grassy path that climbs
Up the hill?

You may hear a jump or trot,
Wistful ones,
You may hear a jump or trot –
Mine, as 'twere –
You may hear a jump or trot
On the stair or path or plot;
But I shall cause it not,
Be not there.

Should you call as when I knew you,
Wistful ones,
Should you call as when I knew you,
Shared your home;
Should you call as when I knew you
I shall not turn to view you,
I shall not listen to you,
Shall not come.

The Woman ~~of the West~~ who went East

"Where is that woman of the west,
Good Sir, once friends with me,
In rays of her own rareness drest,
And fired by sunset from the sea?
Yes, she — once friends with me".

"— She went to sojourn in the east,
O stranger Dame, one day;
Her own west land she reckoned least
Of all lands, with its weird old way,
So left it ~~Long a~~ Dame, one day;

"Doubtless they prized her marvellous mould
At its right worth elsewhere,
~~Good~~ Yea Dame, & kept her shrined in gold,
So speaking, as one past compare:
Aye, prized her worth elsewhere!"

— "Must, must I then a story tell,
Old native, here to you,
Of peradventures that befel
Her eastward — shape it as 'twere new,
Old native, here to you?

"O unforgotten day, ~~alack~~ long back,
When, ~~swiftly~~ wilful, east she sped
From you with her new Love. Alack,
~~All pulsing, flushed, not one look back!~~
Her lips would still be ripe & red
Had she not eastward sped!

"For know, old lover, dull of eyes,
That woman, I am she:
This skeleton that Time so tries
Your rose of rareness used to be;
Yes, sweetheart, I am she."

Not Known.

They know the wilings of the world,
The latest flippancy;
They know each jest at hazard hurled,
But know not me.

They know a phasm they name as me,
In whom I should not find
A single self-held quality
Of body or mind.

~~[illegible]~~

The Boy's Dream.

Provincial town-boy he, — frail, lame,
His face a waning lily-white,
A court the home of his wry, wrenched frame,
Where noontide shed no warmth or light.

Over his temples — flat, & wan,
~~Whose~~ where blue st ~~coursed~~ veins were patterned keen, (so thin
The skin appeared so thinly drawn
The skull beneath was almost seen.

Always a wishful, absent look
Expressed it in his face & eye;
At the strong shape this longing took
One guessed what wish must underlie.

But no. That wish was not for strength,
For other boys' agility,
To race with ease the field's far length,
Now hopped across so painfully.

He minded not his lameness much,
To shine at feats he did not long,
Nor to be best at goal & touch,
Nor at assaults to stand up strong.

But sometimes he would let be known
What the wish was: — to have, next spring,
A ~~young~~ real green linnet — his very own —
Like that one he had ~~once~~ late heard sing.

And as he breathed the cherished dream
To those whose secrecy was sworn,
His face was beautified by the theme,
And wore the radiance of the morn.

126.

The Gap in the White.

(178–.)

Something had cracked in her mouth as she slept,
~~After~~ Having danced with the Prince ~~nightly without pause~~ long, and sipped ~~his~~ gold tass;
And she woke ~~with~~ in alarm, & quick, breathlessly, leapt
Out of bed to the glass.

And there, in the blue dawn, her ~~spread~~ mouth now displayed
To her woe, in the white
Level line of her teeth, a black gap she had made
In a dream's nervous bite.

"O how can I meet him to-morrow!" she said.
"I'd won him – yes, yes! Now, alas, he is lost!"
(That age knew no remedy). Duly her dread
Proved the truth, to her cost.

And if you could go & examine her grave
You'd find the gap there,
But not understand, now that science can save,
Her unbounded despair.

[Sent to Mac^{m}.
for serial pub^{n}.]
in America

Family Portraits.

Three picture-drawn people stepped out of their frames –
The blast, how it blew!
And the white-shrouded candles flapped smoke-headed flames;
– Three picture-drawn people came down from their frames,
And dumbly in lippings they told me their names,
Full well though I knew.

The first was a maiden of mild wistful tone
Gone silent for years,
The next a dark woman in former time known;
But the first one, the maiden of mild wistful tone,
So wondering, unpractised, so vague & alone,
Nigh moved me to tears.

The third was a sad man – a man of much gloom;
And before me they passed
In the shade of the night, at the back of the room,
The dark & fair woman, the man of much gloom,
Three persons, in far-off years forceful, but whom
Death now fettered fast.

They set about acting some drama, obscure,
The women & he,
With puppet-like movements of mute strange allure;
Yea, set about acting some drama, obscure,
Till I saw 'twas their own lifetime's tragic amour,
Whose course begot
~~Largely~~ ~~bearing~~ ~~on~~ me;

Yea – a mystery, ancestral, long
~~Showing ancestral mysteries~~ hid from my reach
In the perished years past,

That had mounted to dark doings each against each
In ~~the~~ those ancestors' days, ~~of those mystery~~ and long hid from my reach;
Which their restless enghostings, it seemed, were to teach
Me in full, at this last.

But fear fell upon me like frost, of some hurt
If they entered anew
On the orbits they smartly had swept when expert
In the ~~concatenations~~ law-lacking passions of life, — of some hurt
To their souls — ~~perhaps~~ and thus mine — which I fain would avert;
So, in sweat cold as dew,

"Why wake up all this?" I cried out. "Now, so late!
Let old ghosts be laid!"
And they stiffened drew back to their frames & numb state
Gibbering: "~~Hereupon~~ Thus are your own ~~way~~ ways to shape, know too late!"
Then I grieved that I'd not had the courage to wait
And see the play played.

I have grieved ever since: to have ~~shunned~~ balked future pain,
My ~~race's~~ blood's tendance foreknown,
Had been triumph. Nights long stretched awake I have lain
Perplexed in endeavours to ~~shun~~ balk future pain
By uncovering the drift of their drama. In vain,
Though therein from sprung lay my own.

The Catching Ballet of the Wedding Clothes.

(Temp: Guliel: IV.)

"A gentleman's coming
To court me, they say:
The ringers are told,
And the band is to play.
O why should he do it
Now poor Jack's away?
I surely shall rue it:
Come, white witch, & say!"

"The gentleman's coming
To marry you, dear;
They tell at the turnpikes
That he has been ~~He's riding hard~~ here!
He rode here in secret, ~~[illegible]~~
To gain eye of you:— ~~[illegible]~~
Throw over the sailor ~~poor one~~
Is what I should do!" ~~[illegible]~~

"I will not throw over
Poor Jack: no, indeed,
For a new unknown lover
Who loves ~~comes~~ at such speed,
And writes to ~~[illegible]~~ the ringers,
And orders the band, ~~band at his will~~,
As if I could only
Obey his command! ~~[illegible]~~

"La! now here is something
Close packed in a box,
And strapped up & corded,
And held with two locks!"

"Dear, that's from him, surely,
As we may suppose?
Ay, through the chink ~~[illegible]~~ shining
I spy wedding clothes!"

"Yes — here's a drawn bonnet,
And tortoiseshell combs,
And a silk gown, silk stockings,
And scents of rare blooms;
And shoes, too, of satin,
Quite past all my pride:
O, how will it end, witch;
I can't be his bride!"

"Don't waste you in weeping:
Not worth it is man!
Beshrew me, my deary,
I've shap'ed a new ~~[illegible]~~ plan.
Wear the clothes of the rich one,
Since he will not see,
But marry the poor one
You love faithfully."

✕ [insert verse on back]

The marriage took place,
Yes: ~~And~~ as vowed, she was true
To her dear Sailor Jack
Ere the gentleman knew;
But she wore the rich clothing,
Much joyed at such guise,
Yet fearing & trembling
With tears in her eyes.

And at midnight, between her
And him she had wed,
The ~~form of the lover~~ gentleman's figure
Arose up & said:
"My too-cruel darling,
In spite of your oaths,
The man you have married
~~[illegible]~~ Of the ring & the clothes!"

Thence on, would confront her,
When sleep had grown slack,
His face on the pillow
Between her & Jack;
And he nightly kept whispering:
"You surely must see,
Though your ~~hand just~~ tongue-tip took him, (Love,)
~~[illegible]~~ Your body took me."

Till she sighed: "Yes, my ~~hand~~ word,
It must be confessed o' me,
Jack has; but this man
~~Should have~~ Can claim all the rest o' me!
And off to go with him
Bewitched am I now:
I'd fain not be two men's,
~~But am~~ And won't, anyhow!"

So she pleaded & pleaded
From daybreak till dark;
Converting the parish
(Save parson & clerk)
She then wrote to ~~Johnny~~ Jack thus:
"I'm torn with mind-strife:—
She who wears a man's bride-clothes
Must be the man's wife!"

And still she kept plaining,
Till Jack he wrote: "Aye!"
And the villagers gathered,
And, on a fixed day,
They went out alertly
And stood in a row,
Quite blithe with excitement
To see John's wife go.

Some ~~stood~~ were facing her dwelling
And some on the bridge,
And some at the corner,
And some by the ridge.
With a nod & a word
The coach stopped at her door,
And she upped like a bird,
And they saw her no more.

'Twas told that, years after,
When autumn winds wave,
A wealthy old lady
Stood long at Jack's grave,
The while her ~~coach~~ chaise waited:—
She mused ~~long~~ there; & then
She stepped in, & never
Came thither again.

1919.

A Winsome Woman.

Song.

There's no winsome woman so winsome as she;
Some are flower-like in mouth,
Some have fire in their eyes,
Some feed a soul's drouth
~~With their~~ Trilling words music-wise;
But where are these gifts all in one found to be
Save in her known to me?

What her thoughts are I read not, but this much I know,
That she, too, will pass
From the sun & the air
To her cave under grass;
And the world will declare
"No such woman as ~~these~~ his passioned utterances show
Walked this planet, we trow!"

The Ballad of Love's Skeleton.

(179–.)

"Come, let's to Culliford Hill & Wood,
And watch the squirrels climb,
And look in sunny places there
For shepherds' thyme".

—"Can I have heart for Culliford Wood,
And hill & bank & tree,
Who know & ponder over all
Things done by me!"

—"Then Dear, don hat, & come along:
We'll strut the Royal strand;
King George has just arrived, his Court,
His guards, & band."

"Well be the royal scenes for you,
And band beyond compare,
But how is she who hates her crime
To frolic there?

"O why did you so urge & say
'I would soil your noble name!'—
I should have prized a little child,
And faced the shame.

—"You are a Baron of the King's Court
From Hanover lately come,
And can forget in song & dance
What chills me numb.

"I see the child – that should have been,
But was not, born alive;
With such a deed in a woman's life
A year seems five.

"I asked not for the wifely rank,
Nor maiden honour saved;
To call a nestling thing my own
Was all I craved.

"For what's the hurt of shame to one
Of no more note than me?
Can littlest life beneath the sun
More littled be?"

"—Nay, never grieve. The day is bright,
Just as it was ere then:
In the Assembly Rooms to-night
Let's ~~foot~~ joy again!

"The new Quick-Step is the sweetest dance
For lively toes & heels;
And when we tire of that we'll prance
Bewitching reels.

"Dear, never grieve! As once we whirled
So let us whirl to-night,
Forgetting all things save ourselves
Till dawning light.

"The King, & Queen, ~~&~~ Princesses three,
Have promised to meet there
The mayor & townsfolk. I've ~~been sent~~ my card
~~A pass~~ And One to spare.

"The Court will dance at the upper end;
Only a cord between
Them & the burgher-throng below:
A brilliant scene!"

—"I'll go. You've still my heart in thrall:
Save you, all's dark to me.
And God knows what, when love is all,
The end will be!"

A Private Man on Public Men

When my contemporaries were driving
Their coach through Life with strain & striving,
And raking riches into heaps,
And ably pleading in the Courts
With smart rejoinders & retorts,
Or where the Senate nightly keeps
Its vigils, till their fames were fanned
By rumour's tongue throughout the land,
I lived in quiet, screened, unknown,
Pondering upon some stick or stone,
Or news of some rare book or bird
Latterly bought, or seen, or heard,
Not wishing ever to set eyes on
The surging crowd beyond the horizon,
Tasting years of moderate gladness
Mellowed by sundry days of sadness,
~~Far~~ Shut from the noise of the world without,
Hearing but dimly its rush & rout,
Unenvying those amid its roar,
Little endowed, not wanting more.

Christmas in the Elgin Room

(British Museum: early Last-Century.)

"What is the noise that shakes the night,
And seems to ~~search~~ soar to the ~~north~~ Pole-star ~~[illegible]~~ height?" —
"— Christmas bells,
The Watchman tells
Who walks ~~these~~ this halls that blears us captives with its blight."

"And what then means ~~Christmas-day~~ such clangs so clear?" —
~~[illegible]~~
"— 'Tis said to have been ~~a~~ day ~~of cheer~~,
~~[illegible]~~
~~And source of~~ grace
~~Used by this~~ To the human race
~~Whose~~ Long ere their woven sails ~~have sped~~ winged us ~~unto~~ to exile here.

"We are those whom Christmas overthrew
Some centuries after Pheidias knew
How to shape us
And to drape us
And to set us in Athena's temple for men's view.

"O it ~~was~~ is sad ~~when~~ now we ~~were~~ are sold —
~~As slaves~~ We gods! — for ~~foreign~~ Borean people's gold,
And brought to the gloom
Of this gaunt room
~~Where~~ Which sunlight ~~comes not, & the day~~ shuns, & sweet Aurore but enters cold.

"For all these bells, would I were still
~~Ruling~~ Radiant as ~~once on Athens'~~ on Athenai's Hill."—
—"And I, and I!"
The others sigh,
"Before this Christ was known, & we had men's good-will."

Thereat old Helios could but nod,
~~Hermes~~ Throbbed too, the Ilissus River-god,
And the torsos there
Of deities fair,
Whose ~~severed~~ limbs ~~lay far~~ were shards beneath ~~the Grecian sod~~ some Acropolitan clod:

~~And Proserpine, & Neptune~~ (too Demeter), Poseidon hoar,
~~Iris, & Ceres~~ Persephone, & many more
~~And none of the band~~ Of Zeus' high breed,—
~~Could understand~~ All loth to heed
What the bells sang that night which shook them to the core.

1905 and 1926

"We are getting to the end."

We are getting to the end of visioning
The impossible within this universe,
Such as that better whiles may follow worse,
And that our race may mend by reasoning.

We know that even as larks in cages sing
Unthoughtful of deliverance from the curse
That holds them lifelong in a latticed hearse,
We ply spasmodically our pleasuring.

And that when nations set them to lay waste
Their neighbours' heritage by foot & horse,
And hack ~~sear~~ their pleasant plains in festering ~~with sodden~~ seams,
They may again, — not warely, or from taste,

But tickled mad by some demonic force. —
Yes. We are getting to the end of dreams!

He resolves to say no more.

O my ~~heart~~ soul, keep the rest unknown!
It is too like a sound of moan
When the charnel-eyed
Pale Horse has nighed:
Yea, none shall gather what I hide!

Why load men's minds with more to bear
That bear already ails to spare?
From now alway
Till my last day
What I discern I will not say.

Let Time roll backward if it will;
(Magians who drive the midnight quill
With brain aglow
Can see it so,)
What I have learnt no man shall know.

And if my vision range beyond
The blinkered sight of souls in bond,
—By truth made free—
I'll let all be,
And show to no man what I see.